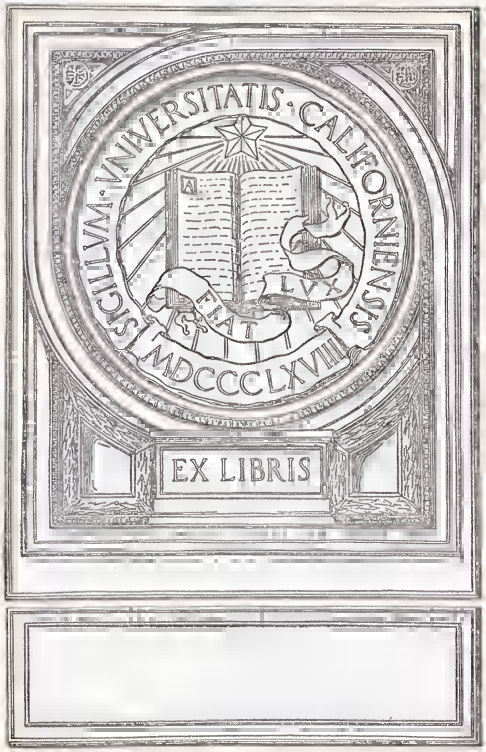
A Dog's Mission

BY

Mrs. H. B. Stowe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1885

THE DOG TAKES REFUGE WITH THE OLD WOMAN.

A

DOG'S MISSION;

OR, THE

STORY OF THE OLD AVERY HOUSE.

AND OTHER STORIES.

BY

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

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CHAPTER I.

THE OLD HOUSE AND THE OLD WOMAN.

"THE old house" of the city of Hindford stood upon a fashionable avenue, with city pavements in front and elegant brick mansions on either side.

It was a sort of ancient phenomenon, standing there amid smart modern houses, on a gay and bustling street; for it was an old brown wooden farm-house, of the kind that our ancestors used to build in days of primitive simplicity a hundred years ago. It was a two-story house in front, but the long roof sloped down behind, till a child might easily jump from it on to the ground.

It had never been painted; its shingles were here and there green with patches of moss. Certain enterprising shrubs had seeded themselves in the eave-troughs, and formed a fantastic nodding fringe along the edges, that made the old house look as queer as antiquated nodding finery makes an old face.

The clapboards here and there were curled with age and starting from the timbers; the lintel of the door had sunk so that the door-posts stood awry; the door-steps were broken and sunken like old grave-stones, and green with dank clinging moss.

Of course there were in front, as must be about every old New England house, the inseparable lilac trees; but these had grown to weird and preternatural proportions, looking into the chamber-windows, and even here and there brushing the herbage of the eave-troughs. Their stems below were gnarled and wreathed, and covered with bright yellow lichen, making their whole air as quaint and witch-like as the rest of the surroundings.

A narrow strip of front door-yard was enclosed by a demoralized old picket-fence; the gate swung unevenly on its hinges, and like everything else about the ancient dwelling, looked forlorn and dreary.

The house, as we have said, stood on one of the fine driving avenues of Hindford, and elegant carriages and prancing horses went by it every day; and every day somebody said, —

"What a queer old witch-like house! How strange that it should be here on this street! Who does live there?"

The answer was, "O, that 's the old Avery place. It can't be sold till old Miss Zarviah Avery dies; she has the life-right, and she won't live anywhere else."

In fact this old Avery house was the decaying relic of a farm, that had once lain quite out in the country near the town of Hindford, but the city had grown and travelled and thrown out its long arms here and there, and drawn into its embrace suburb after suburb, cutting streets and avenues through what was once farm and woodland, and so this old brown farm-house was left a stranded wreck of the old village life, standing by itself, and seeming to frown with a sullen amazement on a street of modern fine houses.

Miss Zarviah Avery was a human wreck like the house. Her village cronies had sold out, or moved off, or died; her family, all but one brother, were dead; nobody came to see her, and she visited nobody.

She was punctual in her seat in the neighboring church every Sunday, and sat always conspicuously on the front seat in the weekly prayer-meeting, where her phenomenal bonnets, her old-fashioned dress, and high, shaking voice, as she intoned the hymns, moved the mirth of that younger generation, who think all the world is a show for their amusement.

She also was a punctual though silent attendant of the weekly female prayer-meeting. It was said Miss Zarviah never had uttered her voice among the sisters but once, when in a faded old green calash and a shrunken washed-out merino shawl, she uttered an emphatic testimony against the vanity of dress and the temptations to worldliness in this regard.

The old inhabitants of Hindford said that Miss Zarviah came of a very respectable family. Her father, Squire Avery, was a deacon in the church, selectman in the village, and a thriving, well-to-do farmer, but the family had dropped away one by one, and she was left, like the last fluttering leaf of the gaunt catalpa in her door-yard, desolate and without a kindred leaf to speak to.

When both parents died Miss Zarviah was left guardian of a younger brother about ten years of age, who with herself was joint heir to the estate. Now Miss Zarviah loved her brother with all her heart, but unluckily, she felt it her duty to show her love in ways that make a boy specially uncomfortable.

She was always checking and reproving him, and setting his sins in order before him. These were many. He came in without wiping his shoes; he hung his hat on the wrong nail, or did n't hang it anywhere; he slopped water when he went to help himself to it; he whistled; he drummed; he brought home and domesticated a puppy who was seven-fold more mischievous than he was.

He was always taming rabbits and squirrels and birds, who all made litter and dirt. Above all, he whittled from morning till night and everywhere.

His clothes were in a chronic state of dilapidation; hat, trousers, stockings, shoes, all giving out before his endless activity.

Poor Miss Zarviah was in despair, and told him so in varied phrases almost every hour of the twenty-four till he began to have an uneasy sense of being a sinner all the time, simply for being a boy. He was secretly of the opinion that his sister hated him, — a point where he did her the greatest injustice.

When he was fourteen years old he fell out of a boat in one of his fishing expeditions, wet himself to the skin, and had in consequence one of those good old-fashioned "runs" of fever, that used to be the support of village doctors, and Miss Zarviah nursed him with unfailing care and tenderness, and used to rehearse to her friends how for ten days and nights she never had her clothes off, nor got a regular night's rest.

So her boy was nursed back from the very borders of the grave, but as soon as he was up and well, he began again to be a sinner, and Miss Zarviah to tell him so.

There is an age when the waves of manhood pour in on the boy like the tides in the Bay of Fundy. He does not know himself what to do with himself, and nobody else knows, either; and it is exactly at this point that many a fine fellow has been ruined for want of faith and patience and hope, in those who have the care of him.

When Eben Avery was seventeen, he flung away from the homestead and his sister at the end of a bitter discussion, in which many sharp and true things had been said on both sides, and away he went to California, seeking his fortune.

He never wrote. He had committed the oversight of his share of the property to a faithful old lawyer, a friend of his father, through whom Miss Zarviah heard only that he was living and doing well, — and so she was left alone.

But there was a sore spot in her old heart. A conscientious person should beware of getting into a passion, for every sharp word one speaks comes back and lodges like a sliver in one's own heart; and such slivers hurt us worse than they ever can any one else.

It was true she was now mistress of the house, with not a soul to disarrange any of her matters. She could clean and shut up rooms, and nobody opened them. There was no litter, no dirt anywhere, for there was nobody to make any. She and her house were as clean and orderly as she wanted to be; nobody whittled; nobody whistled; there were no footsteps to track the floors; no tramping up and down stairs.

The old clock ticked away hour after hour, the only sound to be heard in the ancient dwelling. Miss Avery had a sort of shivering, unspoken sense of lonesomeness. The waters of life were freezing around her, and the circle unfrozen narrowed every year, as one crony and acquaintance after another dropped out of life and came no more.

Still, from year to year, she opened and aired chambers that nobody ever slept in, and at stated intervals routed everything out and conducted a severe house-cleaning where no

dirt had been made. As for her own personal quarters, they had narrowed themselves down to one room, which was to her, bedroom, kitchen, and sitting-room.

The old family "keeping-room" was shut up and kept in an immaculately clean state, with its bright brass andirons, with a bright brass candlestick on each end of the mantel-piece. One day in the week she scrubbed the white floor on her hands and knees, as also the table and dresser in like manner. All her tins were brightened, and everything made resplendent, and she sat down to her knitting victorious.

One would have said that she had nothing to do but to rest on her laurels, but alas! perfection is not for mortals.

The dust from the avenue before the house, kept lively by whirling carriages, would filter through the cracks of the old mansion, and rest on tables and chairs in a manner to keep her combativeness on the stretch.

Then rats and mice bred, mustered, and multiplied in the house. Certain cockroaches, too, had invaded the ancient dwelling, and set up housekeeping in its old cracks and crannies. In vain Miss Avery scolded, scrubbed, scoured; they throve and multiplied and grew impudently bold.

But the dust and the cockroaches, and the rats and the mice, were nothing to another trial of Miss Zarviah's life, — *the boys!*

Back of her fence ran a little alley that abounded with some of the noisiest and most graceless little wretches in Hindford.

— These boys were in the habit of swarming over her fence and through her yard as a shorter cut to the avenue.

This, which was at first a matter of mere convenience, became amusing to the boys when Miss Zarviah, broom in hand, and with her mouth filled with objurgations, chased them and ordered them out of her yard, and threatened them with the police.

Then the matter became exciting, and the fun of making old Witch Avery mad, cutting through her yard and over her fence, and hearing her scold when safely lodged behind it, was a stimulating form of recreation to these graceless little wretches, and our frontispiece shows the glee of the boys and the energetic rage of Miss Zarviah on one of these occasions, which is the subject of our next chapter.

Such was Miss Zarviah, such her troubles and tribulations, when our story opens.

CHAPTER II.

THE DOG TAKES REFUGE WITH THE OLD WOMAN.

IT was a dreary, dripping November night, just between daylight and dusk. Miss Zarviah had hung on her lonely tea-kettle, and was proceeding with her arrangements for an evening meal, when, Whoop! hurrah! hallo! and a sound of a yelping dog and of pattering footsteps came through her yard.

Instantly she seized the broom, and ran and opened the back door. Something that looked like a draggled bundle of rags swept by her into the house with a rattling noise, and fled into the room and under her bed.

"Now, you wretches, if you don't get out this minute, I 'll —

Vigorous blows of the broom finished the sentence. The little imps danced and shouted, but retreated towards the fence.

"We want our dog. He 's run into your old house!" shouted the boldest.

"You sha'n't have your dog! and if you don't clear out, I 'll call the watch!" and Miss Avery seconded her words with well-directed thwacks and thumps, which sent the whole posse in a giggling cataract over the fence, behind which rose such parting salutes as these:

"Who cares for you, old Witch Avery?"

"We 'll come in for all you!"

"Catch us if you can! Where 's your policeman?" and away they went.

Miss Avery went in and shut the door.

She came back into her room and hung up her broom. She felt on the whole that she had gained a victory, — the enemy had lost the dog and she had got him. That was some comfort, and instantly her whole nature rose in determination that they never should have him again.

She looked under her bed, and there, crouching in the far corner, the fire-light gleamed upon a pair of great mournful eyes, and a subdued whine came from the obscurity.

Miss Avery never had been fond of dogs, but this dog she had resolved to protect, and all her combativeness was on his side.

"Come here, doggie!" she said; "good doggie!" So she tried to call him out.

But the tones were rather dry, and wanting in native cordiality, and doggie only crouched farther in his corner, and gave another piteous whine.

Miss Zarviah moved the bed, and walking straight into the dark corner, reached down and took him.

The poor wretch was drabbled with mud, and an old tin kettle, which had been tied to his tail, rattled dubiously as she lifted him.

"Well, did I ever!" exclaimed Miss Zarviah, and she brought him out to the fire-light, and setting him down, put on her spectacles, took her scissors and cut the string.

The pail fell off, and the creature looked up at her with his great sad eyes, and licked her hand humbly.

"Well, I do declare! you poor cre'tur!" said Miss Zarviah.

The dog was quivering and trembling with wet, cold, and fright, but seemed to understand that Miss Zarviah meant well by him; he tried to wag his bedraggled tail, and then

raising himself on his hind legs, he made vigorous gestures of supplication with his two fore-paws. Evidently this was an accomplishment which had been taught him in more prosperous days, and which he now brought forth as a means of conciliation.

It had its effect on Miss Zarviah.

"Well, I will," she said; "poor doggie! I won't let any one catch you again; but you must be washed clean."

And Miss Zarviah brought a small tub which she filled tenderly and carefully, adding warm water from her tea-kettle, and testing it with her hand as if for a baby. Then she produced soap and towels, and set to work vigorously.

She washed and scrubbed till the dog seemed really to half melt away, and be no bigger than a good-sized cat. Then she wiped him dry, wrapped him in an old flannel petticoat, tucked him up in a basket and set him in the warmest corner to dry, while she proceeded to get her supper.

Her protégé stopped shivering, gave a sound of satisfaction as he nestled himself in the warm flannel, and followed her with his great bright eyes as she arranged her supper.

Miss Avery was methodical in all her ways, and this night was the precise night of the week when she always made milk toast, and so milk toast she proceeded to make.

She shook down a glowing clear bed of coals; she cut a couple of slices of very nice bread; she put a skillet of milk down to heat, and proceeded to toast her bread on the end of

TRIP GETS HIS SUPPER.

a long fork. The large bright eyes in the flannel surveyed these proceedings with much apparent interest.

When the milk was poured into the skillet, there was a stir in the basket, and the occupant struggled to get a good view of her progress.

"The cre'tur really seems to know that there are victuals getting ready," said Miss Zarviah; "no doubt he's hungry;" and with this thought she cut another half slice.

When the dipped toast was made, and the tea drawn, and the little round stand set out front of the fire, and Miss Avery sat down to enjoy her tea, there was another commotion in the flannel.

Miss Avery looked; the dog was standing up in his basket, gazing very intelligently at the tea-table.

"Lie down, doggie," she said, "you shall have your supper by-and-by."

But doggie did not lie down, but got out of his basket, and gave himself a shake and a lick here and there, and having repaired to the best of his ability the defects in his toilet, he came and sat down by Miss Zarviah, and rising on his hind legs, made as before supplicating gestures with his fore-paws.

The mouthful of dipped toast that was going to Miss Zarviah's mouth was arrested, and she held it to him.

He took it off her fork and swallowed it with evident appreciation.

"Well, did I ever!" said Miss Avery. "No, I never did; why, the cre'tur all but talks! Well, well," she said, "you shall have your supper right away," and she cut up his half-slice of toast, and put a liberal allowance of milk over it, and set it down before him, and he fell to work at it with gratifying earnestness.

Miss Avery certainly enjoyed seeing the way that half-slice of toast was disposed of more than she did the corresponding morsel which she was eating herself.

"What, more?" she said, cheerfully, as, after the half-slice had disappeared, the great, bright, silent eyes looked up at her; and immediately the saucer was replenished with another portion nicely cut-up, which speedily went the way of the former; and thus sociably she and her protégé finished the supper.

CHAPTER III.

SHE DISCOVERS THAT HE IS A PROVIDENCE.

"WELL, of all things! Who would have thought it?" mused Miss Avery, as, supper being over, she leaned back in her chair and took a dispassionate survey of her new acquisition.

He was now quite dry, and his soft flossy hair of a fine silver color would, if Miss Avery had known anything of such matters, have proclaimed him a dog of blood and breeding; one of those sagacious little Scotch terriers that are pets in high places.

But Miss Avery only knew that he was a *dog* who, by a strange "Providence," as she called it, had become *her* dog, and now she was meditating what to call him.

Her mind reverted to the days long since, when Eben brought home the puppy that made such trouble, and called him Trip.

"Poor Eben!" she said, "I reely was hard on him. I wish now I had been more patient with Trip — just for his sake.

Well, well, we do things that we can't take back, if we want to ever so much," and Miss Avery gave a sigh to those old days, and concluded to call her adopted pet Trip.

She tried the name on him, and he looked bright and wise, and started at it to go after her as she moved about the room, setting up dishes and sweeping the hearth.

If ever a dog could express eager, quivering, joyful devotion, it was Trip; and his assent to being called by this name was so unequivocal that Miss Avery flattered herself she had hit upon the very cognomen he had always gone by.

Miss Avery swept up the hearth, mended her fire, and took out her knitting-work. Trip, who had no knitting-work of his own, looked ardent interest in and approbation of all her movements.

It was a new sensation to Miss Zarviah to be looked upon with such admiration and devotion as were evident in Trip's great soft eyes. He seemed so every way companionable that she could not help talking to him.

"Did the wicked boys plague you?" she said, in a sympathizing tone. "Well, they sha'n't any more; I'll take care of you."

The effect of these words was most unexpected. Trip jumped up and rested his paws against Miss Avery's knees a moment, and then, as if taking a sudden resolution, he sprang into her lap boldly, and began kissing her face with eager dog-caresses.

"Oh! oh! Why, Trip-*pee!* Why! *why!* Good dog! Don't! don't!" said Miss Avery, as much flustered as if it was a suitor that was declaring his regard for her. "There, there! get down, Trip."

But Trip had no idea of getting down; he only quirled himself round, and established himself composedly in the hollow of her lap.

"Did I ever!" said Miss Avery; "he's determined to sit in my lap; well, if you will, you will," and Trip nestled down, closed his eyes, and seemed inclined to take a nap in this comfortable situation.

Outside the wind whistled drearily; the rain dripped from the eaves with a dull, lonely thud; but inside the fire purred and snapped and crackled, and the knitting-needle clicked, and Miss Avery said to herself, —

"Well, how much company a cre'tur is!" and she looked down at Trip with patronizing complacency.

Miss Avery had not had so pleasant an evening within her recollection.

It seemed wonderful to her that she, who had always despised dogs and opposed their way, should be sitting now with one in her lap, and enjoying his being there. Certainly, there must be a Providence in it, said Miss Avery.

When the clock struck nine, Miss Avery knit into her seam-needle, and rolled up her knitting-work, and then, in company with Trip, proceeded to fasten and bolt all the doors, and to

take a tour of survey through all the house, and look under every bed and in every closet, lest a robber might have slipped in and hidden himself.

Trip entered into this survey in high spirits, scampering before her, racing into corners, smelling complacently at rat-holes, and giving here and there a lively bark, for Trip had rat-catching blood in his veins, and felt his foot upon his native heath in an old rat-haunted house.

He ran under beds with cheerful alacrity, and saved Miss Avery's creaking joints the trouble.

When they entered the pantry there was a sudden scuffle and squeak, and Trip stood growling and glorious, his soft eyes blazing, shaking a rat in his teeth.

It was all over with Mr. Rat in a minute; but Trip barked and leaped and shook the victim over, and thrice he slew the slain.

"Well, I declare, you are a good dog; there's that rat that has been plaguing me night after night!" and Miss Avery glorified and fondled Trip to his heart's content, and was more than ever convinced that he was "a Providence."

CHAPTER IV.

HE MAKES HIMSELF AGREEABLE.

WHEN they were a little settled down from this excitement, Miss Avery raked up the fire, and proceeded to array herself for the night, putting on a portentous night-cap that so altered her appearance that Trip at first ran away and barked, and was only to be reconciled when she stroked and talked to him.

Then she arranged his basket in the warm corner, put him in it, and told him to lie down and be a good doggie, and, having extinguished her candle, turned in to her bed.

She felt a sweet serenity and composure in having her protégé so nicely disposed of, and shut her eyes, and was dropping off to sleep, when a tick of paws on the floor aroused her.

Trip had got out of his basket, and was standing by her bedside looking up wistfully.

"Why, Trip, Trippy! what's the matter? Go lie down, Trip!"

A whine, and a begging gesture of the forepaws.

"Trippy, go lie down; there's a good dog."

Instead of this, Trip gave a spring, and jumped upon the foot of the bed, with evident indications that he wanted to sleep there.

She was astonished at his presumption, and rising, she took him firmly in her arms, and, carrying him back to his basket, said, as she laid him down, —

"There, Trip, that is a nice warm bed in a warm corner, and you must lie down and be still." And she patted him down, and drew the flannel over him.

Trip made no more remarks for that time, but lay quite still in his basket; and Miss Avery, complacently reflecting how easy it was to train dogs in the way they should go, resigned herself to her slumbers.

Soon as a fine high piping through the nose announced that Miss Avery was sound asleep, Master Trip ticked quietly across the floor, jumped upon the bed, and settled himself in a comfortable little ball at her feet.

The next morning early, Miss Avery, feeling a remarkable warmth in the region of her feet, looked down and saw the foot-warmer that had established himself there.

The moment she moved, Trip frisked to the top of the bed, and kissed her face, and seemed so delighted and

overjoyed to see her awake that she had not the heart to scold him.

"The cre'tur's ben used to sleeping on somebody's bed," she said, "and he was lonesome, poor fellow! Well, Trippy, you 've kept my feet beautiful and warm, anyhow."

Miss Avery now began to reflect on the responsibilities she had assumed. Trip was certainly a lively, entertaining companion, and he had warmed quite a place in her half-frozen heart; but he was evidently a thoughtless, frisky, heedless fellow, that would be sure to fall into the enemy's hands again if she did n't look after him.

So, the first thing after breakfast, she did what she had so long vainly threatened to do, went to the policeman who had charge of her beat, — a good-natured man, who went to the same church with her, — and detailed to him with some warmth her persecutions from the boys of the neighboring alley; whereupon he took down their names, and assured Miss Avery that he would look after them; and then she went to a carpenter near by, and, as a consequence of this interview, her backyard before night was adorned along the top with a row of sharp, lively spikes, set points uppermost, so as to render it entirely ineligible as a mode of entrance or egress. So she began to feel herself fortified and defended in the possession of her new treasure.

After a week of seclusion, to make sure that Trip would not run away, Miss Avery took him with her whenever she went

to market to look out her daily meals, to the stores, and along the constitutional walks which she maintained for the benefit of her health.

But Sundays and prayer-meeting evenings were seasons of heavy affliction to him. Trip wanted to go to church like a good Christian.

Twice he scandalized Miss Avery by jumping out of a window, and surreptitiously following her to church, appearing before her pew door with a joyous and confident air, as much as to say, "Why, you forgot to take me!" and Miss Avery, to her great mortification, was obliged to take him out, with boys and children looking on and tittering in a distressing manner.

Once, too, he got into prayer-meeting, nestling so discreetly and quietly under her skirts that she never saw him till the services were over. Then he was wild with delight at his success, and barked in a most disreputable manner all the way home.

Trip was always scurrying off after cats, or hens, or other dogs, in their daily promenades, to her poignant anxiety and affliction.

At last, while whirling across a crossing to speak to another dog who was running with a carriage, he got tumbled under the wheel, and broke one of his forepaws, and came back to Miss Avery crying and limping on three legs.

If Miss Avery could have been told a year before of the

patience, the loving kindness, with which she was to nurse a dog through indiscretions like these, she would almost have said, with the Scriptural character, "Is thy servant a dog to do this?"

But the fact was, that Trip seemed only to win the more on her heart for having broken his paw.

Miss Avery bandaged it and wet it with camphor, held him in her lap, let him sleep on her bed; and two or three times in the night, when he cried, got up to wet his bandage, and to console and comfort him.

Poor Miss Avery! No more alone in the world, for there was this little silver-colored thing with dark eyes that adored her, worshipped her, depended on her, and that she thought and cared for and loved in return.

So wore the winter away; but in the spring, when the new leaves came out on the trees, a new leaf was turned in Miss Avery's history.

CHAPTER V.

BLUE EYES COMES TO SEE HIM.

"PLEASE, ma'am, may I come in and see your dog?"

These words were spoken on a bright June day, when the lilacs were abloom in front of the old house. Miss Avery stood out on the stone flagging at the back side of her house doing some washing, and Trip was present helping her.

MISS AVERY AT HER WASHING.

The words were piped up in a clear little voice that seemed to come from fairy land. Miss Avery was at first dazed and astonished, and turned round to look for the speaker.

A pair of great blue eyes were looking up at her out of a cloud of curly hair. A little cambric sunbonnet hung loosely back on the shoulders of a small maiden who seemed to have risen out of the flag-stones.

"Eh! What? What do you say?" said Miss Avery.

"I said, 'Please let me see your Carlo, ma'am,'" said the little girl, making movements towards Trip.

"His name isn't Carlo; it's Trip," said Miss Avery, shortly.

"Oh, is it? I thought it was Carlo. Mayn't I play with him, please, ma'am?"

Trip, meanwhile, had run to the little girl, and was investigating her character, applying his nose seriously to her shoes and dress, and, apparently satisfied, jumped up and fawned upon her.

"He's just like a dog I had once that we called Carlo," said the little voice. "That's the reason I wanted to see him."

"But he is *my dog*, child," said Miss Avery, with a withering frown, "and I don't want anybody to come toling him away."

"Oh," said Blue Eyes, in the most conciliatory tones, "I

know he's your dog. I didn't mean to say that he *was* my Carlo, only that he was *like* my Carlo, and that was why I wanted to play with him. I love dogs. I won't tole him away, and I won't make any trouble, not a bit. I just want to stroke him and play with him a little, he's such a dear little doggie; and see, he loves me," and Trip, springing up, kissed the little face with tumultuous caresses.

"Well, well, child, there's no harm in your stroking him as I know of, but you mustn't try to get him away," said Miss Avery, but half pleased with the intimacy that she saw was beginning.

"Oh, I shan't, indeed I shan't; you can see. I'll just play with him here a few minutes, — it's our recess now, and I can't stay long, — and I'll be very careful not to trouble you. He looks so much like my Carlo that I lost. He run away last fall, and we never could find him."

Now Miss Avery felt a severe twinge of conscience. She was, in fact, the most ultra-conscientious person in all that respected the right of property.

She couldn't help the uncomfortable reflection, "What if this were in fact somebody else's dog?"

It was a question she did not wish to have opened for discussion.

She did not mean to believe any thing of that kind, and was determined to make good her right in him.

But she compromised with her conscience in thinking she

would let the little girl come and enjoy his society under her own auspices.

So when the child said, —

"I guess it's time to go back to school now, but if you'll let me, I'll come next recess," Miss Avery responded graciously, —

"If you'll be a good little girl and not make any trouble, you may come and play with the dog whenever you like."

"Oh, thank you, ma'am. I'll try to be as good; I'll be very quiet, and do just as you tell me," and the little puss gave a parting kiss and hug to Trip, and then made a courtesy to Miss Avery, and ran off to her school.

"It isn't — it can't — it *shan't* be her dog," said Miss Avery to herself. "I saved his life; he'd have been dead before now if it hadn't been for me. Who has the best right, a little careless chit like that, that never ought to be trusted with a cre'tur, or one that knows how to take care of 'em! Besides, Trip *loves* me: he wants to stay with me, and cre'turs have some rights; they know who they want to stay with, and they ought to stay where they are taken care of. Trip is happy here, and he ought to stay here."

Thus Miss Avery reasoned while stirring about her housework, sweeping, dusting, and scouring on the immaculate keeping-room.

"You love me, don't you, Trip?" she often asked, stopping for a moment in her work, and Trip frisked and jumped and

licked her face and hands, and in every possible inflection of dog dialect professed his undying fealty and devotion.

"What nonsense! What a fool I am to worry," she said; "jest for that little chit who don't know one dog from another. Suppose she did have a dog run away. Does that prove that this is the dog? Of course not. The city is full of dogs; one dog looks just like another. Besides, her dog was named Carlo, and this one was named Trip. I knew his name was Trip; he knew his name the first time I called it. Don't tell *me!*" and Miss Avery shook her head threateningly at an imaginary opponent, and as she had an old red handkerchief tied over it with flapping ends, her head-shaking appeared really formidable and convincing. Trip barked at her once or twice, she looked so very belligerent.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WOMAN WHO HATES DOGS.

NOW little Blue Eyes had the fullest conviction in her wise young heart that this was her own dog — her lost Carlo. Her father had bought for her in New York a little silky silver-colored Scotch terrier, and given fifty dollars for him, on purpose that Blue Eyes might have him for a playmate and confidential friend while her mother and he were gone.

But, unfortunately, Mrs. Symons, in whose house and under whose care the little one was placed, was one of those good women who hate dogs of every degree. She never would have one in the house if she could help it, and Carlo was sedulously kept outside of the house at all times, except when his little mistress was at home. If he happened to stray into the parlor or dining-room, the good lady seemed to feel that the place had been polluted, — his hair, she declared, would come off on the sofa or chairs, or he would be sure to do some mysterious mischief, and so he was broomed out ignominiously as soon as Bright Eyes' back was turned.

Carlo naturally did n't like this state of things. He became despondent and timorous, and would make frequent excursions into the street in the forlorn hope of looking for his young mistress. In one of these excursions he fell into the hands of the rabble of boys that infested Miss Avery's back lane, and for six months had been lost to the sight, though dear to the memory, of poor little Blue Eyes.

So, the first day she had seen him at Miss Avery's, she went home and announced that she had found Carlo. The news was received with very active opposition on the part of Mrs. Symons.

"Why, no, child! you can't have found Carlo! How do you know? There are dozens of dogs of that sort. Carlo has been gone these six months, and for my part I am glad of it; he was nothing but a plague."

"Well, at any rate, Miss Avery says I may come and see him, and play with him at her house," said Blue Eyes, "and that's better than having him here, because Miss Avery likes him, and is kind to him."

"What! that old cross Miss Avery?"

"She is n't cross; she 's just as good as she can be to Carlo. She calls him 'Trip,' she thinks everything of him, and she says I may come to see him as often as I've a mind to; and I shall go and see him every day, and all Saturday afternoon," said the little one, resolutely, as she went up stairs.

"Wife," said Mr. Symons, who had been listening to this

talk from the next room, "did she say it was Miss Avery she was visiting?"

"Yes;" said his help-meet.

"Well, let her go there. But what is the attraction? Not Miss Avery's personal charms, I'm sure."

"No; it's a little dog that the child thinks is like hers that ran away. For my part, I think like enough it *is* hers. But I'd rather Miss Avery would keep it than have it back in the house here. I hate dogs, and I was glad when it ran away. But just to think that the child should go right to the house of her own aunt!"

Now Mr. Symons was the friendly lawyer to whom Eben Avery had committed the management of his property. The little girl had been left with him this summer, while the parents were away attending to some necessary business. In the fall they were to come back, and then there was to be an attempt at a final settlement of the Avery estate.

Eben Avery had become a stout, cheery, well-to-do man of forty, had come back from California, and was desirous now to return to Hindford and build a house on the old place.

Miss Avery's life-right in the ancient ruinous dwelling was all that stood in the way of the plan, and Mr. Symons had long been searching for acceptable words wherewith to break to her the news of her brother's return, and of his plans.

He had mentally surveyed her as a fortress to be carried, and had not known where to effect an entrance. When,

therefore, he heard what the little one had done, he put his hands in his pockets, and gave a contented whistle.

"Well," he said, "the old woman 's such a crotchety, crabbed old thing, I did n't know how to go to work with her; and there was no saying whether she 'd take to Eben, or whether she 'd rake up the old grudge. There 's never knowing what folks will do in their family quarrels. But there 's a soft streak in the old lady, it appears. Better let Patty Coram work on her. She 'll bring her round, if anybody can. Of course, she don't know whose child it is?"

"Oh no; I don't think she does."

"Well, tell Patty Coram not to tell her. There 's never any saying with these crotchety people. It might spoil all the fun if she knew whose daughter she was. She 'd get going over the old story of the quarrel between her and Eben, and maybe it would set her against the girl."

So Mrs. Symons warned the little one, with many a headshake, that old Miss Avery was very queer indeed, and she better not tell her name to her — it might make the old lady cross, and she would n't let her come; but that if she were careful she might go and see Carlo as often as she liked. And Mrs. Symons congratulated herself that the dreadful dog was thus taken care of in a way to both satisfy his young mistress and keep him out of her own way.

CHAPTER VII.

BLUE EYES PURSUES HER ADVANTAGE.

THE next day the little girl came again, and this time the interview was accorded in the house.

It was bright June weather, and the "keeping-room" windows were open, and the smell of lilacs came pleasantly in, and Miss Avery sat with her sewing. "Oh, how pleasant it is here," said Blue Eyes. "I'm *so* glad you let me come. I do *love* Trip so, and Trip is glad to see me, ain't you, Trip?"

Trip responded to this with his usual effusion, expending so many caresses on the little face that Miss Avery began to feel a twinge of jealousy.

"What is your name, little girl?" she said.

"Oh, I've got lots of names. Papa calls me Pussy and Daisy; and Mr. Symons calls me Patty Coram, and Aunty Symons calls me Pet, and I don't know which is my name."

"Do you live with Mr. Symons?"

"Yes, I'm staying with them now till my papa and mamma come; they're gone on a journey now, and Aunt Symons takes care of me while they're gone, and I go to school to the school-house on this street, — that's where I go to school, — and it's so near I can come in at recess; but it's time to go now," said the little maid, running for her bonnet.

"Please, Miss Avery, may I come here to-morrow afternoon? To-morrow is Saturday, and I can stay a good long while."

Miss Avery looked intently into the great wide earnest blue eyes that were looking up from her knee, — it was as if a blue violet were talking to her, — and the little rosy mouth quivered with earnestness.

She said, "Yes, my dear," in a voice softer than she was in the habit of using. The little one, with an impulsive movement, threw her arms round her neck and kissed her.

"Oh," said Miss Avery, half-pleased, half-shocked, "you shouldn't kiss such an old thing as I am."

"Yes I should, because you are good to me," said Blue Eyes, as she kissed her again, and then tripped lightly away.

Miss Avery sat in a sort of maze. Those kisses had roused a commotion in her dry old heart.

"What a dear little thing it is!" she said. "Strange she should want to kiss me,—my poor old withered face! Well, if she's coming to-morrow,—"

Miss Avery here rose and went to her pantry. As if inspired by a new thought, she changed her dress immediately, and put on one devoted to cooking, and went to work with flour and sugar and spices to compound some cakes such as she remember Eben used to love. She sifted, she grated, she pounded, she beat eggs, to Trip's great amazement.

"Yes, Trippy," she said, "you and I are going to have company to-morrow, and we must get ready, Trippy, mustn't we?"

Trip responded vigorously to the suggestion, and flew about in a very active manner to express his pleasure in the proceedings.

Miss Avery cleared her fire, and put down her tin baker, and soon the cakes rose clear and light, and browned to her heart's content.

"I'll frost them," she said, meditatively. "Children always like frosting. Oh, if I had only some caraway sugar-plums to put on top! O you Trip, if you were good for anything, I could send you over to get some caraways."

But as Trip, with all his activity, could not compass this errand, Miss Avery changed her dress again, and went across to a confectioner's, and bought an ounce of caraway sugar-plums of divers colors most brilliant to behold, where-

with, on her return, she adorned the frosting of her little cakes.

Then Miss Avery remembered an upper drawer in which there was a china image of a little white lamb standing in a very green china hedge of very pink and blue flowers, and this lamb she now drew out of his hiding-place.

It was given to her when she was a little girl, and as she looked at it, her thoughts travelled back to the days when she was no higher than this little one, and when Saturday afternoon was a paradise of untold brightness for her.

She set it on the mantel-piece between the candlesticks, and in front of the snuffer-tray.

Then she proceeded to cover a ball of old ravellings with some bright flannels, and fasten a long cord to it, for the little girl and Trip to play together with; and just to try its effects, she threw it time and again, and laughed to see Trip scamper after it.

"Why, what a fool I am!" she said, when she had consumed about half an hour playing with Trip.

Miss Avery was beginning to feel young again.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BRIGHT SATURDAY AFTERNOON.

THE keeping-room wore quite a festive air. Some purple and white lilacs in an old china vase adorned the table, and Miss Avery, conscious of stores of attraction in her cupboard, had been waiting impatiently for her little visitor, when she heard a knock at the front door, and it was a race between her and Trip which should get to it first.

Trip's joyful barks filled the house, while Miss Avery pulled and jerked the old front door, which, being rheumatic and unused to opening, hung obstinately back, and at last flew open with a bounce that was like to upset them both.

"There, now!" said the little one. "It's Saturday afternoon, and I can stay till sundown; aint you glad?" she asked, looking up at Miss Avery with great clear wide blue eyes.

"To be sure I am," said Miss Avery, heartily, as she hung up the little bonnet; and then, taking down the china lamb from the mantel, she said, "See there! that's what I used to

play with when I was a little girl; you shall play with it when you come to see me."

"Oh, how beautiful! May I take it?" said the child.

"Yes," said Miss Avery; and stooping shyly towards her, as she handed the toy, she said, —

"Have n't you got another kiss for me?"

"Oh dear, yes," said the little one, throwing her arms round her neck. "I've got twenty kisses for you; for I really love you, 'cause you are so good."

"No, no, I'm not good," said Miss Avery, with a half-sigh; "I'm a poor, homely, cross old woman."

"No, you're not; you're not cross a bit. Nobody shall say you are cross, shall they, Trippy? Trip knows how good you are, don't he, Trippy?" And Trip barked an energetic testimony of Miss Avery's goodness.

Miss Avery felt the sweet flattery of a child's love with a new and strange delight, and all the lines of her face softened and lighted up so that she looked almost handsome.

The small visitor now chattered on like a little brook over stones, running here and there, and asking questions about everything she saw.

"What funny chamber stairs!" she said, as she peeped into the entry; "they look just like pieces of pie. Can Trippy and I go and see what is up there?"

"Oh yes; I'll show you," said Miss Avery; and she took the little girl and Trip the round of the chambers above.

One of them was kept with a special nicety. The window-curtains were spotless and white, the bed was neatly made; there was a writing-table with books and papers on it.

"This was my brother's room," said Miss Avery.

"Where is he?" said the little one, innocently.

"I don't know," said Miss Avery, and her countenance fell.

The little one picked up a book on the table, and opened it, and read on the fly-leaf, —

"EBEN AVERY."

"Why, that's my papa's name!" she said; "his name's Eben Avery."

Miss Avery turned pale and sat down in a chair, putting her hand to her head. The room seemed to go round for a moment; but in a moment more she commanded herself, and said, —

"Your papa's name Eben Avery? Where is he?"

"He's travelling now. I don't know where he and mamma are, but he's coming here by-and-by. We used to live way, way, *way* off, out in California; but papa is coming to live here in Hindford."

"O you dear child! you dear child!" said Miss Avery, catching her in her arms with a sort of dry sob. "Why, I'm your own aunty! Your father was my brother Eben. This used to be his room when he was a boy. Thank the Lord I see you!" she said.

"Well, there now! I knew you must be my aunty," said the little one, cheerily, "you are so good to me; you are my ownty downty aunty, and I shall love you always;" and this was confirmed by a shower of kisses.

"Yes, yes," said Miss Avery. "I was n't good to your poor father; I was cross to him. I did n't mean to be cross, but I was; but I 'll never be cross to you, my darling. I 'll make it all up to you."

"I don't believe you ever was cross to papa or anybody else," said the child, sturdily.

"Yes, I was; but I 've been very sorry ever since, and I hope he won't lay it up against me," said Miss Avery, humbly.

"Oh, indeed, papa will love you, I know! Papa is always good to everybody; and as full of fun! he 's always making people laugh and have good times."

"He never told you what a cross old sister I was?"

"Oh, indeed, he did n't! he said how you used to sit up with him and nurse him when he was sick."

"Did he remember that? Well, I did love Eben, though I did n't always act like it."

"I 'm ever so glad," remarked Blue Eyes, "that you *are* my aunty, 'cause now you 'll come and live with us. You and I and Trip, — we 'll live together; won't it be fun?"

Miss Avery laughed, — she had n't felt so gleeful for years, — and then, when she had opened all her drawers and all her

cupboards, and shown everything she had in the house, and answered questions without end, the happy party came down again and produced Trip's ball, and soon she and little Blue Eyes and Trip were engaged in a real romp, and the old house rang with peals of laughter and barks, and there was such a scampering and pattering and skurrying about as had n't been known for years. Miss Avery got her hair loosened and her cheeks red, and laughed till she had to sit down and hold her sides.

When tired of this fun, Miss Avery recovered her dignity, and set herself seriously to getting tea, in which business Blue Eyes and Trip assisted according to their ability.

The little round table was set in the keeping-room, and some nice biscuits were baked in the baker before the fire, and tea was made, and finally, as a crowning glory, the plate of frosted cakes, gay with many-colored sugar-plums, was put on the table.

Miss Avery was not disappointed in the sensation they produced. The little one clapped her hands, and laughed and admired, and Trip barked, and altogether they had a merry time of it.

They sat down at table, with Trip between them decorously mounted on his cushion, and Miss Avery said grace, and Trip looked as sober and devout as if he had two legs instead of four, a feat which Blue Eyes warmly commended.

"Trip knows just how to behave at table, don't he?" she said; "that 's because you 've taught him, aunty."

"Yes, Trip is a good dog," said Miss Avery; "you see he waits till I fix his supper for him."

It was a joyous tea-party, and full justice was done to the cakes, and Miss Avery went back into long histories of the old days when Eben was a boy, and the house stood on a farm far out from the city, and they used to have hens and chickens, and pigs and ducks, and all sorts of nice things. Miss Avery seemed to grow young again as she told the story.

"Now, dear, what is your name?" she said; "you never really told me your name."

"Well, my real name is Margaret; but they call me lots of other things, — Daisy, and Dot, and Puss, and Mr. Symons calls me Patty Coram and Chatterbox; he's a funny man, Mr. Symons is."

"Margaret — I knew it — it's mother's name," said Miss Avery. "Dear, your grandmother was a good woman — you are named after her — I hope you 'll be like her."

When the sun sank low, the child started for home with two cakes, that she could not eat, stuffed in her small pocket.

There were kisses exchanged, and promises to come again. As she trotted gaily off, Miss Avery gazed after her till the last of her little pink dress faded in the distance.

"Thank the Lord! thank the Lord!" she said. "He has been good to me."

CHAPTER IX.

A JOYFUL SUNDAY.

MISS AVERY woke next morning with a vague sense of some sudden good fortune, and gradually the events of the day before came over her.

She was no more alone in the world, with nobody to love and nobody loving. She rejoiced in her little niece as one that findeth great spoil.

She stepped about alertly getting her breakfast; she went up stairs and set open the windows of Eben's room.

The purple and white lilacs looked in inquisitively as to say, —

"What now?"

"He 'll come here; Eben will come back now. Well, he 'll see I've kept his room for him," said Miss Avery, as she smoothed a wrinkle on the bed and flecked a little dust from the table.

The first bells were ringing for church; to her they seemed joy-bells; and Miss Avery dressed herself to go out with a

light heart. Trip ran to her quivering with eagerness. Miss Avery's heart was touched for him.

"Trippy, you poor doggie! I'm sorry, but I can't take you to church," she said, as he stood wagging his tail, and looking eagerly at her. "It's Sunday, Trippy, and you can't go to church with me, though you are a great deal more up to your light than some who do go."

Miss Avery explained this over to Trippy, but it did n't seem to convince him; and when she left the house, he stood on his hind legs at the window barking frantically.

Miss Avery's mind in sermon-time wandered to her little niece. She saw her blue eyes, and felt her caresses and kisses, and her heart was glad within her; and she caught herself in sermon-time projecting how she would make some "crullers," and sift sugar over them for the child's delectation when she came to see her old aunty.

"I'm afraid I shall make an idol of that child," she said to herself when she found where her thoughts had been wandering.

When she got home Trippy was outrageous in his joy.

"It's worth going out for, to have any cre'tur so glad to see one," she said. "Ah, Trippy! you was a Providence. If it had not been for you, Trippy, she would n't 'a' ben here, Trippy! Trippy! you've ben a real blessing to me. Now to-morrow she'll come again, the dear little thing!"

The next day Miss Avery looked eagerly at the old clock.

and counted the minutes to recess-time, but no little Blue Eyes came. She wondered and waited in vain.

The solemn old clock ticked and struck, and Miss Avery strained her ears for the sound of the little footsteps. Never had the house seemed so lonely; but no little footsteps came.

"Why, I could n't have believed I 'd 'a' missed her so," said Miss Avery to Trip, and Trip looked as if he thought so too. "Well, she 'll be here to-morrow, anyway," she said, as she lay down to sleep at night.

CHAPTER X.

WHERE IS BLUE EYES?

BUT to-morrow came and told the same story, — no little girl. Miss Avery lay awake at night wondering and wishing she knew; but when the third day passed, and she did not come, Miss Avery put on her bonnet and marched up to Mr. Symons's, and knocked at the front door, and inquired for Mrs. Symons.

That good lady, a little fat easy woman, appeared, for some cause, agitated and worried.

Miss Avery was a very square, direct, exact sort of a person in her dealings, and never wasted words, so she came to the point directly.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Symons," she said. "I came to inquire for my brother's little girl."

"Oh," said Mrs. Symons, "then you know? Well, I declare! I told Mr. Symons you *ought* to know; but dear me! I don't know what we shall all do. She's taken down with scarlet fever — got it at school, I s'pose — taken Monday morning — I expect she sat by some child that had it in school or Sunday-school; any rate she's got it, and we don't know where to look for a nurse."

Miss Avery here interposed briefly, —

"*I* will come and nurse her. It's *my* place. I will take care of her."

"Oh, you will? Well, if you feel able. I ain't used to sickness, you see, and I" —

"I *am* used to sickness," said Miss Avery, briefly, "and if I undertake a thing, I *do it*. I'll just go home and take my things and lock up the house and be here in an hour. I shall have to bring my little Trip with me. I can't leave him alone in the house; but he never makes any trouble, and she's fond of him, and loves to have him round."

"Well," said Mrs. Symons, "we'll do the best we can."

"And I shall do the best *I* can," said Miss Avery, resolutely.

And in a few hours she was established at the bedside of her little patient, with her old-fashioned watch on the stand, and her gargles and medicines all arranged in order, with a soft pair of list shoes upon her feet, the very image of regularity, neatness, and order.

The little one woke from a heavy sleep, opened her eyes and smiled.

"*You* here, aunty?" she said, and she reached her arms up to her; and Aunt Avery stooped down and kissed her once and again.

"I'm *so* glad you've come!" said the child. "My throat hurts me so, and I'm *so* hot!"

"I came to help you, darling. I'll take care of you till you are well again."

The child dozed off in a heavy stupor. After a while, Miss Avery put a spoonful of the rose-leaf gargle in her mouth, and she woke again, and looked earnestly at Miss Avery.

"I'd like to go to heaven *sometime*," she broke out; "but I don't want to go now. I want to see papa and mamma again."

"Yes indeed, darling; I trust you will," said Miss Avery, who felt her heart sink within her at the very suggestion.

"Have you brought Trip?" faintly whispered the child.

"Oh yes; here he is," said Miss Avery. And sure enough,

Trip, standing on his hind legs, was gazing on his little playmate, with his great soft eyes full of sympathy. She smiled faintly, and reached her little hand. He licked it, and she laughed. "It tickles," she said. "Let him stay where I can see him," she added; and so Trip had his cushion put in a chair by her bedside, where he conducted himself in a sympathizing and Christian manner, restraining his natural impetuosity, and behaving with the utmost quietness.

Now and then he would step gently and softly on the bed, and steal up and put his cold nose to the little hot face; and then she woke from her feverish stupor, and said, "Dear Trippy, is that you?"

"The cre'tur knows something is the matter as well as I do," said Miss Avery.

Something was the matter, and a very grave something; for the disease was of a virulent type, and for days and nights it was uncertain how it would go with the child. Miss Avery was every moment at her post.

She had all her life been combating dust, dirt, disorder, rats, and flies; but now she was in a more awful combat, — fighting hand-to-hand with *death!*

One night the symptoms grew worse. The hands and feet of the little sufferer became cold as ice, and the doctor said that if there was no rallying she could not live till morning.

Miss Avery was grimly resolute and watchful, and incessant in her care, but there was a dreadful sinking in her heart.

"I can't — I *can't* spare her, — oh, I *can't!*" she said; and then there came into her head a verse she sung every week at prayer-meeting: —

> "The dearest idol I have known,
> Whate'er that idol be,
> Help me to tear it from thy throne,
> And worship only thee."

"Oh, I can't — I *can't* say that?" she said. She turned in a sort of blind way, and opened a Bible and read, —

"*My daughter is even now dead, but come and lay thine hand on her, and she shall live.*"

She fell on her knees, rested her head on the bed, and cried out, —

"O Jesus, help me — help me! I *can't* give her up!" It was a paroxysm, a rush of the whole soul; all there was in the woman was in it; and a moment after, the words passed through her mind, as if a gentle voice had spoken them, —

"*I will come and heal her.*"

She rose again, with a strange new sense of relief and trust. It was as if she had indeed touched the hem of His garment.

She bent over the child, and felt her hands; they were warmer; a little moisture stood on her forehead; she looked better. The tide of life had passed the lowest ebb, and was beginning to flow back, and by morning there was a decided

improvement. "Well, Miss Avery, you've fought it out bravely," said the doctor, when he felt the child's pulse in the morning. "I think we shall keep her. The crisis is over, and, with good nursing like yours, we shall have her on her feet in a week."

CHAPTER XI.

THE THANKSGIVING DINNER.

THE telegram that was to have summoned Eben Avery to the bedside of his little daughter missed him, coming one hour after he had left the place of address. It was not till the danger was over, and recovery fairly established, that he heard of the child's state. Then he and his wife hurried to Hindford.

Miss Avery was sitting in the well-ordered room, with her little patient in her lap.

For the first time the child had been dressed that day in her ordinary clothes, and was reposing after the fatigue in those fond, faithful old arms that had borne her through her sickness.

"Here she is?" said a voice outside the chamber door, and

immediately a stout, cheery, middle-aged man had his arms round both of them, and was kissing both indiscriminately.

"Eben! Eben!" "Sister!" "Papa!" "Mamma!" were the sounds that rose all together; and then a pretty little woman claimed her share, and kissed both Miss Avery and the child.

It was a confused, laughing, crying, joyful sort of meeting, and Trip barked distractedly, not knowing what to make of it.

"There, now, let's sit down and be quiet," said Eben Avery. "We must n't make such a racket among us. Come, Sister Zarviah, let me take her a minute." And Miss Avery put the little one into his arms, and her face for the moment was radiant with its expression of tender feeling.

"There, Eben," she said, "I've kept her for you; now you 'll forgive my being cross to you."

"Forgive you, my dear old soul! Why, that's a pretty story! What have I to forgive? Were n't you always the most painstaking creature that ever was? and I was enough to tire the patience of Job himself. My wife, there, will tell you what a fiery trial I am."

"Oh papa, you are not!" said the little one.

"Shut up, Pussy; *you* must n't talk! You 'll get a relapse, or something. We ought not to have come in on you so suddenly; but there! it's just like me. I could n't help it. I'm the same noisy, careless fellow."

"Dear sister," said the beautiful lady, her eyes filling with tears, "I don't know what I can ever say to thank you!"

"Oh, don't say anything," said Miss Avery. "I did it because I wanted to. I loved her. She's the dearest little thing! and the Lord's given her back. I felt when she was so low — that — if she died, I should die, too!"

"Well, well," said Eben, "you shan't either of you die now! and we'll all live together in peace, and plenty, and prosperity."

The last scene in our story is a Thanksgiving dinner at the old Avery House.

There were present at table Mr. Eben Avery and his wife, our little Blue Eyes, Miss Avery, and Trip, — Trip, with a fine new collar, with a little silver bell upon it. Miss Avery presided, attired in a new black India satin which Eben had brought to her from California, and a thread-lace cap which Eben's wife had trimmed with her own fair hands.

"Now this seems like old times," said Eben, looking cheerily round. "Nobody like you, Sister Zarviah, for getting up a Thanksgiving dinner!"

Miss Avery confessed that she had given her mind to this one, and that she was relieved that the turkey had "browned just right." Perfection in one thing, at least, had been reached.

"And now, Zarviah, since this is the last of the old Avery House, let's have a rousing good time in it," said Eben.

"Give Trip all the turkey he wants, and Pussy all the pie, and let me talk nonsense much as I've a mind to."

"Yes," said Miss Avery; "Trip ought to have his share of our Thanksgiving, for he's been a good Providence to me. I was getting crusty and cross, and frozen up, and did n't care for anybody till Trip got me to caring for him."

"And then, auntie, I came after Trip, and you got to loving *me*, did n't you, auntie?"

"That I did," said Miss Avery, heartily.

"I tell you what, wife," said Eben, "I 'm going to build the finest house in Hindford on this very spot, and I 'm going to build Zarviah's room just to suit her, with all sorts of cupboards and closets and squirrel-holes for her to put all her precious things in, and she shall have a keeping-room with all the old things in it that are here; and we 'll keep the old lilacs to look in at the chamber windows, and Zarviah won't know but what she 's living in the old house, only there 'll be no leaks, and no rats, and no cockroaches; and Zarviah shall have it all her own way in her part of the house."

"Well, I shall stay in auntie's part; I know I shall like it best. She always lets me do just what I want to."

"There, Zarviah, you 'll just spoil that child," said Eben.

"She can't be spoiled," said Miss Avery, sententiously.

"At any rate," said the little lady, "Trip and I know we shall have good times with auntie, don't we, Trippy?" Trip barked his assent; and so ends the story of a dog's mission.

LULU'S PUPIL.

LITTLE Miss Lulu was tired of all her dolls, — and she had a good many dolls to be tired of. There was the big china doll with blue eyes and light flaxen hair; and there was the pink wax doll with a curly golden wig; and there was the little china doll dressed like a boy, and the black china doll with a red petticoat that waited on the white lady dolls; and there was the doll that could open and shut its eyes, and the doll that could say "Mamma;" in fact, there were about a dozen more that I cannot now enumerate, but

Lulu had become tired of them all. "I want a real *live* doll," she said.

So one day her mamma brought her home the pet that you see here represented in the picture. It was a little Spitz puppy named Muff. His hair was long and silvery white, he had bright black eyes, and the prettiest pink tongue in the world, and was about the jolliest little dog that could be bought for any money. He was called Muff because he looked, when set down upon the carpet, very much like a little white muff running about on four little white stumpy legs; and the moment he was put down in the parlor he trotted about smelling at every thing he could find. He smelt of the curtains, of the chairs, of the ottomans, and ran his nose all along the side of the room, which is a dog's way of taking an observation.

Lulu was delighted. This was a pet worth having. Her dolls, she thought, were stupid. They never did anything; they never moved unless she moved them; the doll that could open and shut its eyes never did open or shut them except just while Lulu pulled the wire, and Lulu got tired of pulling the wire. But no sooner was Mr. Muff set down on his four paws in the corner than he began such a whisk and scamper that it made lively times for Lulu. Round and round he ran, snuffing at this thing and at that, and barking with a short, quick snap, like the letting off of a pistol.

"Mercy on us!" said Lulu's mamma, "what shall we do if

that dog is going to bark so? It goes through my head like a knife. Lulu, if you are going to have Muff for your dog, you must teach him not to bark."

"O yes, indeed, mamma," said Lulu, "I'll teach him;" and so she sat down on the ottoman and took Muff in her lap to instruct him how to behave.

Muff had been racing, so that his little pink tongue hung like a ribbon out of his mouth, and Miss Lulu proceeded to fan him in order to cool him, as she said, "Now, Muffie dear, you must remember you are *my* dog now, and I must teach you exactly how to behave. You must n't bark out loud in the parlors, Muffie; do you hear?"

Just then the door-bell rang, and down jumped Muffie, and "whack, whack, whack" went his sharp little bark.

It was Miss Marabout and Miss Tulleport come in all their best flowers and feathers and silk dresses to call on mamma.

In vain did Lulu try to stop Muff; she could not catch him. He ran "whack, whack, whacking," now here and now there, under Miss Marabout's silk trail and over Miss Tulleport's new satin, and made such a din and confusion that nobody could hear anybody else speak.

"Jennie, you must take that dog and shut him up in the nursery," said mamma; and away Muff was carried in deep disgrace, barking like a pocket-pistol all the way.

"O dear me, Muffie, what a bad dog you are!" said little Miss Lulu, who came trailing up-stairs after him, "to bark so

just after I talked to you so nicely, and told you just how to behave."

Well, that was not the worst scrape that Muff got his young mistress into. He was, to tell the truth, the most mischievous little wretch that ever wore dog-skin. What do you think of this? One day it was decided that Lulu was to go with a whole party of children to a picnic in the country. Her mamma had just finished for her a smart little cambric dress to wear on the occasion, and when Lulu went to bed it was laid out on a chair that she might put it on in the morning.

But, alas! in the morning there was no dress to be seen, and after great searching and wondering it was found under the bed in Mr. Muff's possession. Muff was shaking it about in his mouth, and had torn and mangled it so that it was not fit to be seen. In fact, he had chewed up and swallowed half of the front breadth, so that there was no possibility of mending it.

Lulu wept bitterly over her spoiled dress, and all the more that it was spoiled by her new favorite. It was agreed that Muff should be put into solitary confinement while she went to the picnic. So Muff was locked into a closet, and Lulu went off with her tears dried, and an old dress in place of the new one she had expected to wear.

Arrived on the picnic ground, who should appear, fresh and noisy, but Master Muff? He had jumped out of the

closet window and followed his mistress, determined to see some of the fun!

This is only one specimen of the mischief that Muff was always doing. He used to run away with Lulu's shoes and stockings, and chew them to a paste; he used to tear her ribbons to shreds, and, when nothing else came to hand, would attack the books and newspapers, shaking and worrying them till they were all in tatters.

Every day Maggie or Susan came down to mamma with some new story of Muff's naughty doings. He had torn the window-curtains, he had chewed off a corner of a sheet, he had scratched and pawed off the fringe from the ottoman. "What *shall* we do with the creature?" said mamma. "I'm sure I never would have bought him had I known what a trouble he would be."

"He will have to be sent away if he don't mind," said papa.

But the moment papa spoke of sending Muff away Lulu's great blue eyes filled with tears, and her lips trembled, and she seemed so broken-hearted that papa said, "Well, well, we 'll try him a little longer."

Then how hard Lulu tried to make Muffie comprehend the situation! She would take him into her lap and preach to him gravely: "Now you see, Muffie, I love you, and I don't want you sent off; but if you go on so they will send you 'way 'way off, where you 'll never, *never* see me any more. Would n't that make you feel bad, Muffie?"

Muffie would sit with his head very much on one side, and his tongue like a pink streamer hanging out of his mouth, and listen with a waggish air to all his mistress's instructions, showing just about as much feeling as some little boys and girls do when their mammas tell them of what may happen to them when they grow up if they do not heed their counsel.

"The fact is," Muff seemed to say, "I have always been a pretty lucky dog, and I don't believe anything very bad will happen to me."

Muff liked very much to trot about with his little mistress when she went out for a walk. Then he would cock his ears and tail, and pad along as important as possible. He would run and bark at every cat and dog or hen and chicken in his way, and seemed delighted to keep everything about him in a flutter.

People scolded a great deal, and some even threatened to shoot him; but when little Lulu came in sight with her blue eyes and golden hair they concluded to let him go for her sake.

Muff wanted very much to go to church Sundays. He went everywhere else with Lulu, and why he was shut up to private meditation on Sundays was a thing he could not understand. So he would watch his opportunity and slip out of a door or window, and trot off to church, and to Lulu's astonishment appear suddenly in the broad aisle. Once he even went up and sat in the chancel as grave and innocent as pos-

sible. Lulu's heart was in her mouth when the sexton put him out, and she had to leave church to go home with him.

"How often must I tell you, Muffie, church is n't for dogs?" she said, when she got him safe home. "You may go everywhere else with me, but you must n't go to church!"

Muffie could not speak, but his eyes said, "Why must n't I?" as plainly as the thing could be spoken.

However, on reflection, Muff thought he had found out a way to manage the matter. He waited till everybody was in church one Sunday, and then jumped out of the pantry window and trotted off to meeting. He took possession of a deserted slip near the door, and mounting the seat sat up as grave as a judge, and seemed resolved to show that a dog could act like a good Christian.

For a while all went on very well, and nobody noticed that he was there; but at last a great bluebottle fly whizzed down into his face, when "whack" came out Muff's short bark. Everybody looked round, and Muff barked again; then Lulu got up and ran down the aisle just as the sexton seized him.

"O, please don't do anything to him!" said Lulu. "You know he 's only a dog; I try to teach him so hard, but he won't learn."

The sexton smiled on the little maiden, and she took her pet home.

"O Muffie, Muffie, what trouble you do make me!" she

said; "but yet I love you, and I would n't have you sent off for the world."

Since then little Lulu has grown a bigger girl, and Muff has grown an older and a soberer dog. He no longer chews up her shoes and stockings, and he has learned to spend Sundays in private reflection, but he never will learn not to bark. Little by little, however, people have become used to his noise, and like him in spite of it.

THE DAISY'S FIRST WINTER.

SOMEWHERE in a garden of this earth, which the dear Lord has planted with many flowers of gladness, grew a fresh, bright little daisy.

The first this little daisy knew, she found herself growing in green pastures and beside the still waters where the Heavenly Shepherd was leading his sheep. And very beautiful did life look to her, as her bright little eyes, with their crimson lashes, opened and looked down into the deep crystal waters of the brook below, where the sunshine made every hour more sparkles, more rings of light, and more brilliant glances and changes of color, than all the jewellers in the world could imitate. She knew intimately all the yellow-birds, and meadow-larks, and bobolinks, and blackbirds, that sang, piped, whistled, or chattered among the

bushes and trees in the pasture, and she was a prime favorite with them all.

Multitudes of beautiful flowers grew up in the water, or on the moist edges of the brook. There were green arrow-heads, which in their time gave forth their white blossoms with a little gold ball in the centre of each; and the pick-erel-weed, with its thick, sharp, green leaf, and its sturdy spike of blue blossoms; and the tall meadow-grass, with its graceful green tassels hanging down and making wavy reflections in the water; and there was the silver-weed, whose leaves as they dipped in the brook seemed to be of molten silver, and whose tall heads of fringy white blossoms sent forth a grateful perfume in the air; and there, too, were the pink and white azalias, full of sweetness and beauty, and close along in the green mosses of the banks grew blue and white violets, and blood-root, with its silvery stars of blossom; and the purple hepatica, with its quaint hairy leaves; and the slender wind-flower on its thread-like stem; and the crowfoot, with its dark bronze leaf and its half-shut flower, looking like the outside of a pink sea-shell.

These beautiful blooming things did not all blossom at once, but had their graceful changes; and there was always a pleasant flutter of expectation among them, — either a sending forth of leaves, or a making of buds, or a bursting out into blossoms; and when the blossoms passed away, there was a thoughtful, careful maturing of seeds, all

packed away so snugly in their little coffers and caskets of seed-pods, which were of every quaint and dainty shape that ever could be fancied for a lady's jewel-box. Overhead there grew a wide-spreading apple-tree, which in the month of June became a gigantic bouquet, holding up to the sun a million silvery opening flowers, and a million pink-tipped buds; and the little winds would come to play in its branches, and take the pink shells of the blossoms for their tiny air-boats, in which they would go floating round among the flowers, or sail on voyages of discovery down the stream; and when the time of its blossom was gone, the bountiful tree from year to year had matured fruits of golden ripeness which cheered the hearts of men.

Little Daisy's life was only one varied delight from day to day. She had a hundred playmates among the light-winged winds, that came to her every hour to tell her what was going on all over the green pasture, and to bring her sweet perfumed messages from the violets and anemones of even the more distant regions.

There was not a ring of sunlight that danced in the golden network at the bottom of the brook that did not bring a thrill of gladness to her heart; not a tiny fish glided in his crystal paths, or played and frolicked under the water-lily shadows, that was not a well-known friend of hers, and whose pleasures she did not share. At night she held conferences with the dew-drops that stepped about among the flowers in their

bright pearl slippers, and washed their leaves and faces before they went to rest. Nice little nurses and dressing-maids these dews! and they kept tender guard all night over the flowers, watching and blinking wakefully to see that all was safe; but when the sun arose, each of them spread a pair of little rainbow wings, and was gone.

To be sure, there were some reverses in her lot. Sometimes a great surly, ill-looking cloud would appear in the sky, like a cross schoolmaster, and sweep up all the sunbeams, and call in a gruff voice to the little winds, her playfellows, to come away from their nonsense; and then he would send a great strong wind down on them all, with a frightful noise, and roar, and sweep all the little flowers flat to the earth; and there would be a great rush and pattering of rain-drops, and bellowing of thunders, and sharp forked lightnings would quiver through the air as if the green pastures certainly were to be torn to pieces; but in about half an hour it would be all over, — the sunbeams would all dance out from their hiding-places, just as good as if nothing had happened, and the little winds would come laughing back, and each little flower would lift itself up, and the winds would help them to shake off the wet and plume themselves as jauntily as if nothing had gone amiss. Daisy had the greatest pride and joy in her own pink blossoms, of which there seemed to be an inexhaustible store; for, as fast as one dropped its leaves, another was ready to open its eyes, and there were buds of every size, waiting still

to come on, even down to little green cushions of buds that lay hidden away in the middle of the leaves down close to the root. "How favored I am!" said Daisy; "I never stop blossoming. The anemones and the liverwort and the bloodroot have their time, but then they stop and have only leaves, while I go on blooming perpetually; how nice it is to be made as I am!"

"But you must remember," said a great rough Burdock to her, — "you must remember that your winter must come at last, when all this fine blossoming will have to be done with."

"What do you mean?" said Daisy, in a tone of pride, eying her rough neighbor with a glance of disgust. "You are a rough, ugly old thing, and that's why you are cross. Pretty people like me can afford to be good-natured."

"Ah, well," said Dame Burdock, "you 'll see. It's a pretty thing if a young chit just out from seed this year should be impertinent to me, who have seen twenty winters, — yes, and been through them well, too!"

"Tell me, Bobolink," said Daisy, "is there any truth in what this horrid Burdock has been saying? What does she mean by winter?"

"I don't know, — not I," said Bobolink, as he turned a dozen somersets in the air, and then perched himself airily on a thistle-head, singing, —

DAISY AND HER FRIENDS.

"I don't know, and I don't care;
It 's mighty pleasant to fly up there,
And it 's mighty pleasant to light down here,
And all I know is chip, chip, cheer."

"Say, Humming-bird, do you know anything about winter?"

"Winter? I never saw one," said Humming-bird; "we have wings, and follow summer round the world, and where she is, there go we."

"Meadow-Lark, Meadow-Lark, have you ever heard of winter?" said Daisy.

Meadow-Lark was sure he never remembered one. "What is winter?" he said, looking confused.

"Butterfly, Butterfly," said Daisy, "come, tell me, will there be winter, and what is winter?"

But the Butterfly laughed, and danced up and down, and said, "What is Daisy talking about? I never heard of winter. Winter? ha! ha! What is it?"

"Then it 's only one of Burdock's spiteful sayings," said Daisy. "Just because she is n't pretty, she wants to spoil my pleasure too. Say, dear lovely tree that shades me so sweetly, is there such a thing as winter?"

And the tree said, with a sigh through its leaves, "Yes, daughter, there will be winter; but fear not, for the Good Shepherd makes both summer and winter, and each is good in its time. Enjoy thy summer and fear not."

The months rolled by. The violets had long ago stopped blooming, their leaves were turning yellow, but they had beautiful green seed-caskets, full of rows of little pearls, which next year should come up in blue violets. The dog-toothed violet and the eye-bright had gone under ground, so that no more was seen of them, and Daisy wondered whither they could be gone. But she had new acquaintances far more brilliant, and she forgot the others. The brook-side seemed all on fire with golden-rod, and the bright yellow was relieved by the rich purple tints of the asters, while the blue fringed gentian held up its cups, that seemed as if they might have been cut out of the sky, — and still Daisy had abundance of leaves and blossoms, and felt strong and well at the root. Then the apple-tree cast down to the ground its fragrant burden of golden apples, and men came and carried them away.

By and by there came keen, cutting winds, and driving storms of sleet and hail; and then at night it would be so cold, so cold! and one after another the leaves and flowers fell stiff and frozen, and grew black, and turned to decay. The leaves loosened and fell from the apple-tree, and sailed away by thousands down the brook; the butterflies lay dead with the flowers, but all the birds had gone singing away to the sunny south, following the summer into other lands.

"Tell me, dear tree," said Daisy, "is this winter that is coming?"

"It is winter, darling," said the tree; "but fear not. The Good Shepherd makes winter as well as summer."

"I still hold my blossoms," said Daisy, — for Daisy was a hardy little thing.

But the frosts came harder and harder every night, and first they froze her blossoms, and then they froze her leaves, and finally all, all were gone, — there was nothing left but the poor little root, with the folded leaves of the future held in its bosom.

"Ah, dear tree!" said Daisy, "is not this dreadful?"

"Be patient, darling," said the tree. "I have seen many, many winters; but the Good Shepherd loses never a seed, never a root, never a flower: they will all come again."

By and by came colder days and colder, and the brook froze to its little heart and stopped; and then there came bitter, driving storms, and the snow lay wreathed over Daisy's head; but still from the bare branches of the apple-tree came a voice of cheer. "Courage, darling, and patience! Not a flower shall be lost: winter is only for a season."

"It is so dreary!" murmured Daisy, deep in her bosom.

"It will be short: the spring will come again," said the tree.

And at last the spring did come; and the snow melted and ran away down the brook, and the sun shone out warm, and fresh green leaves jumped and sprang out of every dry twig of the apple-tree. And one bright, rejoicing day, little Daisy

opened her eyes, and lo! there were all her friends once more; — there were the eye-brights and the violets and the anemones and the liverwort, — only ever so many more of them than there were last year, because each little pearl of a seed had been nursed and moistened by the snows of winter, and had come up as a little plant to have its own flowers. The birds all came back, and began building their nests, and everything was brighter and fairer than before; and Daisy felt strong at heart, because she had been through a winter, and learned not to fear it. She looked up into the apple-tree. "Will there be more winters, dear tree?" she said.

"Darling, there will; but fear not. Enjoy the present hour, and leave future winters to Him who makes them. Thou hast come through these sad hours, because the Shepherd remembered thee He loseth never a flower out of his pasture, but calleth them all by name: and the snow will never drive so cold, or the wind beat so hard, as to hurt one of his flowers. And look! of all the flowers of last year, what one is melted away in the snow, or forgotten in the number of green things? Every blade of grass is counted, and puts up its little head in the right time; so never fear, Daisy, for thou shalt blossom stronger and brighter for the winter."

"But why must there be winter?" said Daisy.

"I never ask why," said the tree. "My business is to blossom and bear apples. Summer comes, and I am joyful;

winter comes, and I am patient. But, darling, there is another garden where thou and I shall be transplanted one day, where there shall be winter no more. There is coming a new earth; and not one flower or leaf of these green pastures shall be wanting there, but come as surely as last year's flowers come back this spring!"

OUR CHARLEY.

WHEN the blaze of the wood fire flickers up and down in our snug evening parlor, there dances upon the wall a little shadow with a pug nose, a domestic household shadow — a busy shadow — a little restless specimen of perpetual motion, and the owner thereof is "*Our Charley*."

Now, we should not write about him and his ways, if he were strictly a peculiar and individual existence of our own home circle; but it is not so. "Our Charley" exists in a thousand, nay, a million families; he has existed in millions in all time back: his name is variously rendered in all the tongues of the earth; nay, there are a thousand synonymes for him in English — for certainly "our Willie," or "our Harry," or "our Georgie," belongs to the same snub-nosed, rosy-cheeked, restless shadow-maker. So in France, he is "Leonce," or "Pierre," as well as "Charle;" in Italy, he is "Carlino" or "Francisco;" in Germany, "Max," "Carl," or "Wilhelm;" and in China, he is little "Ling-Fung," with a long silk tail on the back of his head, — but the same house-

hold sprite among them all: in short, we take "our Charley" in a generic sense, and we mean to treat of him as a little copy of the grown man — enacting in a shadowy ballet by the fireside all that men act in earnest in after-life. He is a looking-glass for grown people, in which they may see how certain things become them — in which they may sometimes even see streaks and gleamings of something wiser than all the harsh conflict of life teaches them.

"Our Charley" is generally considered by the world as an idle little dog, whose pursuits, being very unimportant, may be put off or put by for every and any body; but the world, as usual, is very much mistaken. No man is more pressed with business, and needs more prudence, energy, tact, and courage to carry out his schemes, in face of all the opposing circumstances that grown people constantly throw in his way.

Has he not ships to build and to sail? and has he not vast engineerings to make ponds and docks in every puddle or brook, where they shall lie at anchor? Is not his pocket stuffed with material for sails and cordage? And yet, like a man of the world as he is, all this does not content him, but he must own railroad stock too. If he lives where a steam whistle has vibrated, it has awakened an unquiet yearning within him, and some day he harnesses all the chairs into a train, and makes a locomotive of your work-table and a steam whistle of himself. He inspects toy-shop windows, gets up flirtations with benevolent shopmen; and when he gets his

mouth close to papa's ear, reveals to him how Mr. So-and-so has a locomotive that will wind up and go alone — so cheap too — can't papa get it for him? And so papa (all papas do) goes soberly down and buys it, though he knows it will be broken in a week.

Then what raptures! The dear locomotive! the darling black chimney sleeps under his pillow that he may feel of it in the night, and be sure when he first wakes that the joy is not evaporated. He bores everybody to death with it as artlessly as grown people do with their hobbies. But at last the ardor runs out. His darling is found to have faults. He picks it to pieces to make it work better; finds too late that he can't put it together again; and so he casts it aside, and makes a locomotive out of a broken wheelbarrow and some barrel staves.

Do you, my brother, or grown-up sister, ever do any thing like this? Do your friendships and loves ever go the course of our Charley's toy? First, enthusiasm; second, satiety; third, discontent; then picking to pieces; then dropping and losing! How many idols are in your box of by-gone playthings? And may it not be as well to suggest to you, when you find flaws in your next one, to inquire before you pick to pieces whether you can put together again, or whether what you call defect is not a part of its nature? A tin locomotive won't draw a string of parlor chairs, by any possible alteration, but it may be very pretty for all that it was made

for. Charley and you might both learn something from this.

Charley's business career, as we have before intimated, has its trials. It is hard for him to find time for it; so many impertinent interruptions. For instance, there are four hours of school, taken out of the best part of the day; four mortal hours, in which he might make ships, or build dams, or run railroad cars, he is obliged to leave all his affairs, often in very precarious situations, and go through the useless ceremony of reading and spelling. When he comes home, the house-maid has swept his foremast into the fire, and mamma has put his top-sails into the rag-bag, and all his affairs are in a desperate situation. Sometimes he gets terribly misanthropic; all grown people seem conspiring against him; he is called away from his serious business so often, and his attention distracted with such trifling matters, that he is indignant. He is rushing through the passage in hot haste, hands full of nails, strings, and twine, and Mary seizes him and wants to brush his hair; he is interrupted in a burst of enthusiasm, and told to wash his hands for dinner; or perhaps — a greater horror than all — company is expected, and he must put on a clean new suit, just as he has made all the arrangements for a ship-launching down by the swamp. This dressing and washing he regards with unutterable contempt and disgust; secretly, too, he is sceptical about the advantages of going to school and learning to read; he believes, to be sure, when papa and mamma tell

him of unknown future advantages to come when he is a "great man;" but then, the present he is sure of; his ships and sloops, his bits of string and fish-hooks, and old corks and broken railroad-cars, and above all, his new skates; these are realities. And he knows also what Tom White and Bill Smith say; and so he walks by sight more than by faith.

Ah, the child is father of the man! When he gets older he will have the great toys of which these are emblems; he will believe in what he sees and touches — in house, land, railroad stock — he will believe in these earnestly and really, and in his eternal manhood nominally and partially. And when his Father's messengers meet him, and face him about, and take him off his darling pursuits, and sweep his big ships into the fire, and crush his full-grown cars, then the grown man will complain and murmur, and wonder as the little man does now. The Father wants the future, the Child the present, all through life, till death makes the child a man.

So, though our Charley has his infirmities, he is a little bit of a Christian after all. Like you, brother, he has his good hours, when he sits still and calm, and is told of Jesus; and his cheeks glow, and tears come to his eyes; his bosom heaves; and now he is sure he is going to be always good; he is never going to be naughty. He will stand still to have his hair combed; he will come the first time mother speaks; he will never speak a cross word to Katy; he repents of having tyrannized over grandmamma, and made poor mamma's

head ache; and is quite sure that he has now got the victory over all sin. Like the Israelites by the Red Sea, he beholds his spiritual enemies dead on the sea-shore. But to-morrow, in one hour even, what becomes of his good resolutions? What becomes of yours on Monday?

With all our Charley's backslidings, he may teach us one thing which we have forgotten. When Jesus would teach his disciples what *faith* was, he took a child and set him in the midst of them. We do not suppose that this child was one of those exceptional ones who have memoirs written, but a common average child, with its smiles and tears, its little naughtinesses and goodnesses; and its aptness as an example was not in virtue of an exceptional but a universal quality. If you want to study faith, go to school to *your* Charley. See his faith in you. Does he not believe that you have boundless wealth, boundless wisdom, infinite strength? Is he not certain of your love to that degree that he cannot be repelled from you? Does he hesitate to question you on anything celestial or terrestrial? Is not your word enough to outweigh that of the wisest of the earth? You might talk him out of the sight of his eyes, the hearing of his ears, so boundless is his faith in you. Even checks and frowns cannot make him doubt your love; and though sometimes, when you cross him, the naughty murmuring spirit arises, yet in an hour it dissolves, and his little soul flows back, prattling and happy, into your bosom. Be only to God as he is to you, and

the fireside shadow shall not have been by your hearth in vain.

But *what is to be done with our Charley?* Yes, that is the question! The fact is, there seems to be no place in heaven above, or earth beneath, that is exactly safe and suitable, except the bed. While he is asleep, then our souls have rest; we know where he is and what he is about, and sleep is a gracious state; but then he wakes up bright and early, and begins tooting, pounding, hammering, singing, meddling, asking questions, and, in short, overturning the peace of society generally, for about thirteen hours out of the twenty-four.

Every body wants to know what to do with him — every body is quite sure that he can't stay where they are. The cook can't have him in the kitchen, where he infests the pantry to get flour to make paste for his kites, or melts lead in the new saucepan. If he goes into the wood-shed, he is sure to pull the wood-pile down upon his head. If he be sent up garret, you think for a while that you have settled the problem, till you find what a boundless field of activity is opened amid all the packages, boxes, bags, barrels, and cast-off rubbish there. Old letters, newspapers, trunks of miscellaneous contents, are all rummaged, and the very reign of Chaos and old Night is instituted. He sees endless capabilities in all things, and is always hammering something, or knocking something apart, or sawing or planing, or dragging boxes or barrels in all directions to build cities, or laying rail-

road tracks, till every body's head aches, quite down to the lower floor, and every body declares that Charley must be kept out of the garret.

Then you send Charley to school, and hope you are fairly rid of him, for a few hours at least. But he comes home noisier and busier than ever, having learned of some twenty other Charleys every separate resource for keeping up a commotion that the superabundant vitality of each can originate. He can dance like Jim Smith; he has learned to smack his lips like Joe Brown; Will Briggs has shown him how to mew like a cat; and he enters the house with a new war-whoop learned from Tom Evans. He feels large and valorous; he has learned that he is a boy, and has a general impression that he is growing immensely strong and knowing, and despises more than ever the conventionalities of parlor-life — in fact he is more than ever an interruption in the way of decent folks, who want to be quiet.

It is true, that if entertaining persons will devote themselves to him exclusively, reading and telling stories, he may be kept in a state of quiescence; but then this is discouraging work, for he swallows a story as a dog does a piece of meat, and looks at you for another, and another, without the slightest consideration, so that this resource is of short duration; and then the old question comes up, What is to be done with him?

But, after all, Charley is not to be wholly shirked, for he is an institution, a solemn and awful *fact*; and on the answer of

the question, What is to be done with him? depends a future. Many a hard, morose, and bitter man has come from a Charley turned off and neglected — many a parental heart-ache has come from a Charley left to run the streets, that mamma and sisters might play on the piano and write letters in peace. It is easy to get rid of him — there are fifty ways of doing that — he is a spirit that can be promptly laid for a season, but if not laid aright, will come back by-and-by a strong man armed, when you cannot send him off at pleasure.

Mamma and sisters had better pay a little tax to Charley now, than a terrible one by-and-by. There is something significant in the old English phrase, with which our Scriptures make us familiar — a *man* child! A MAN child! — there you have the word that should make you think more than twice before you answer the question, What shall we do with Charley?

For to-day he is at your feet — to-day you can make him laugh, you can make him cry, you can persuade and coax, and turn him to your pleasure; you can make his eyes fill and his bosom swell with recitals of good and noble deeds; in short, you can mould him if you will take the trouble.

But look ahead some years, when that little voice shall ring in deep bass tones; when that small foot shall have a man's weight and tramp; when a rough beard shall cover that little round chin, and all the strength of manhood fill out that little form. Then, you would give worlds to have the key to his

heart, to be able to turn and guide him to your will; but if you lose that key now he is little, you may search for it carefully with tears some other day, and not find it. Old housekeepers have a proverb, that one hour lost in the morning is never found all day — it has a significance in this case.

One thing is to be noticed about Charley, that rude, and busy, and noisy, as he inclines to be, and irksome as carpet rules and parlor ways are to him, he is still a social little creature, and wants to be where the rest of the household are. A room ever so well adapted for a play-room cannot charm him at the hour when the family is in reunion; he hears the voices in the parlor, and his play-room seems cold and desolate — it may be warmed by a fire and lighted with gas, but it is *human* light and warmth he shivers for — he longs to take his things down and play by you; he yearns to hear the talk of the family, which he so imperfectly comprehends, and is incessantly promising that of the fifty improper things which he is liable to do in the parlor, he will not commit one if you will let him stay there.

This instinct of the little one is Nature's warning plea — God's admonition. O, how many a mother who has neglected it, because it was irksome to have the child about, has longed, when her son was a man, to keep him by her side, and he would not! Shut out as a little Arab — constantly told that he is noisy, that he is awkward and meddlesome, and a plague

in general — the boy has at last found his own company in the streets, in the highways and hedges where he runs, till the day comes when the parents want their son, the sisters their brother; and then they are scared at the face he brings back to them, as he comes all foul and smutty from the companionship to which they have doomed him. Depend upon it, mothers, and elder sisters, if it is too much trouble to keep Charley in your society, there will be places found for him, warmed and lighted with no friendly fires, where he who "finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," will care for him if you do not. You may put out a tree, and it will grow aright while you sleep; but a *son* you cannot treat so. You must take trouble for him, either a little now, or a good deal by-and-by.

Let him stay with you at least some portion of every day. Put aside your book or work to tell him a story, or read to him from some book. Devise still parlor plays for him, for he gains nothing if he be allowed to spoil the comfort of the whole circle. A pencil and a sheet of paper, and a few patterns, will often keep him quiet for an hour by your side; or in a corner he may build a block house, annoying nobody; and if occasionally he does disturb you now, balance in your own mind which is the greatest evil, to be disturbed by him now, or when he is a man.

Of all that you can give your Charley, if you are a good man or woman, *your presence* is the best and safest thing.

God never meant him to do without you, any more than chickens were meant to grow without being brooded.

Then let him have some place in the house where it shall be no sin to hammer, and pound, and saw, and make all the litter that his various schemes of business require. Even if you can ill afford the room, weigh well which is best, to spare him that safe asylum, or take the chance of one which he may find for himself in the street.

Of all devices for Charley which we have tried, a few shelves, which he may dignify with the name of a cabinet, is one of the best. He picks up shells, and pebbles, and stones — all odds and ends; nothing comes amiss; and if you give him a pair of scissors and a little gum, there is no end of the labels he will paste on, and the hours that he may innocently spend in sorting and arranging. A bottle of liquid gum is an invaluable resource for various purposes; nor must you mind though he varnish his nose and fingers, and clothes, so that he do nothing worse. A cheap paint box, and some engravings to color, is another; and if you will give him some real paint and putty, to paint and putty his boats and cars, he is a made man. All these things make trouble, — to be sure they do, and will, — but Charley *is* to make trouble; that is the nature of the institution. You are only to choose between safe and wholesome trouble and the trouble that comes at last like a whirlwind.

God bless the little fellow, and send us all grace to know what to do with him!

The stories following are some of those with which one mother has beguiled the twilight hours of *one* Charley; they are given in hopes that other mothers may find pleasure in reading them to their Charleys.

TAKE CARE OF THE HOOK.

CHARLEY'S mother would often sit with him by the fire, before the lamp was lighted in the evening, and repeat to him little pieces of poetry. This is one that Charley used to like particularly. It is written by Miss Jane Taylor.

THE STORY OF THE LITTLE FISH.

"Dear mother," said a little fish,
"Pray is not that a fly?
I 'm very hungry, and I wish
You 'd let me go and try."

"Sweet innocent," the mother cried,
And started from her nook,
"That horrid fly is meant to hide
The sharpness of the hook!"

Now, as I 've heard, this little trout
Was young and silly too;
And so he thought he 'd venture out,
To see what he could do.

And round about the fly he played,
With many a longing look;
And often to himself he said,
"I 'm sure that 's not a hook.

"I can but give one little pluck
To try, and so I will."
So on he went, and lo, it stuck
Quite through his little gill.

And as he faint and fainter grew,
With hollow voice he cried,
"Dear mother, if I 'd minded you,
I should not thus have died"

After this was finished, Charley looked gravely into the fire, and began his remarks upon it. "What a silly fellow that little trout was! He might have known better."

"Take care, Charley," said his mamma; "there are a great many little boys just as silly as this trout. For instance, I knew a little boy, a while ago, whose mamma told him not to touch green apples or currants, because they would make him sick. He did not mean to touch them, for he knew that it is very disagreeable to be sick and take medicine, but yet he did the very same thing that this little trout did.

"Instead of keeping far away, he would walk about under the trees and pick up the green apples to look at, and feel of the green currants, just as the little fish would play round the hook. By-and-by he said, 'I really don't think they will

hurt me; I will just take one *little* taste.' And then he ate one, and then another, till finally he got very sick. Do you remember?"

"O mamma, that was I. Yes, I remember."

"Now, Charley, hear what I tell you: nobody does very wrong things because he means to at first. People begin by little and little, just tasting and trying what is wrong, like this little fish.

"There is George Johnson, a very fine boy, a bright boy, and one who means to do right; but then George does not always keep away from the hook. You will see him sometimes standing round places where men are drinking and swearing. George does not mean ever to drink or to swear; he only stands there to hear these men sing their songs and tell their stories, and sometimes he will drink just a little sip of sugar and spirits out of the bottom of a tumbler; but George never means really to be a drunkard. Ah, take care, George; the little fish did not mean to be caught either, but he kept playing round and round and round the hook, and at last he was snapped up; and so you will be if you don't take care.

"Then William Day means to be an honest boy, and you could not make him more angry than to tell him he would ever be a thief; and yet William *plays too much round the hook*. What does he do? Why, he will take little things out of his father's desk or shop, or out of his mother's basket or

drawers, when he really does not want his father or mother to see him or find it out. William thinks, 'O, it 's only a little thing; it is n't much matter; I dare say they had just as lief I had it as not.' Ah, William, do you think so? Why do you not go to your parents and ask for it, then? No; the fact is that William is learning to steal, but he does not believe it is stealing any more than the little fish believed that what looked like a fly was in fact a dreadful hook. By-and-by, if William does n't take care, when he goes into a shop or store, he will begin to take little things from his master just as he did from his father and mother; and he will take more and more, till finally he will be named and disgraced as a thief, and all because, like the little fish, he *would play around the hook*."

"Mamma," said Charley, "who are George Johnson and William Day? Did I ever see them?"

"My dear, I must use names in a story; I am just making this up to show Charley what I meant by *playing round the hook*. And now let me teach you a text out of the Bible that means the same thing: 'He that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little.'"

A TALK ABOUT BIRDS.

ONE bright morning, when the yellow dandelions were shining out like so many gold dollars in the green grass, and the brooks were chattering and purling to each other, and small eyebrights were looking up from the turf like flocks of little white sheep, a little boy, whom we shall call Jamie, found, all of a sudden, that his school had stopped, and he had come to the first day of his vacation.

So says Jamie to himself, "What shall I do all day long?" After a while he thought he would take a basket, and go over into a neighboring field, and gather some eyebrights and violets to dress flower vases for his mamma.

Well, over the fence he went, and wandered far off into the field; and there he met two strange boys, larger than he, whose names were Will Drake and Charley Jones.

"Hulloa!" said one of the boys to him; "come along with us — we are going to have fun. We have got our pockets full

of stones, and we are going to kill birds with them; it's the best fun in the world."

Now, Jamie was a thoughtless little fellow, and when another boy asked him to do a thing, at it he went at once, without so much as thinking whether it was right or not; so he filled his pockets with stones, and began running and shouting with the other boys. "Hulloa! there's a chipping bird," said one; "I'll hit him." "Look at that robin!" bawled another; "send a stone at him. O, there's a blue-bird! now for him!" I am happy to say that these boys missed their hits, generally, for they intended much worse than they were able to do.

While they were thus running about, a nice white cat came stepping along the top of a fence, putting down her paws as daintily as any lady. "Hulloa! there's a cat; now for fun," shouted Will Drake, as he let fly a stone, and then dashed after the cat. Puss was frightened, and scampered with all her might; and all three of the boys joined chase after her, and came tumbling, one after another, over the back-yard fence of the place where Jamie lived.

But Jamie's mother had been sitting at her window watching the whole affair; and now she stood up, and called, in a very quiet way, "Jamie, come up here; I have something to show you."

The other two boys slunk away a little. Jamie came up into his mother's room, all panting and hot, and began — "Mamma, what do you want to show me?"

Now Jamie's mamma was a very kind and tender-hearted woman, and nothing seemed more dreadful to her than cruelty to any animal. Some mothers, who felt as she did, would have seized Jamie by the arm, and said, "Here, you naughty boy; I saw you stoning birds over in the lot; if you ever do such a thing again, I shall punish you." But Jamie's mother had reflected about these things, and made up her mind that when little boys did cruel things, it was more because they were *thoughtless*, than because they at heart were cruel; and, therefore, instead of blaming him harshly, she set out to make him *think*.

So, when Jamie came in, she washed his heated face and hands, and then took from a drawer a small black box, which she wound up with a key like a watch-key. As soon as the box was set down, it began to play a most beautiful tune, and Jamie was astonished and delighted.

"What a curious box!" said he; "who did make it?"

"I do not know," said his mother; "but why do you think it is curious?"

"Why, it is curious to see a musical instrument shut up in such a little box. Why, I could carry this about in my pocket. I wish 't was mine, and I 'd set it a-going, and put it in my pocket some day, and then I could make the boys stare."

"But," said his mother, "if you think it strange to see a musical instrument put in a little box, what would you

think if I could tell you of one which was so small as to be put in a bird's throat?"

"In a bird's throat!" said Jamie; "who ever heard of such a thing?"

"Well," answered his mother, "there is a boy in this room who has been listening this morning to a little instrument which is inside of a bird's throat, and which can make sweeter music than this box; and yet he did not seem to wonder at it at all."

Jamie looked wondering at his mother. "When you went into the fields, did you not hear robins and blue-birds playing on little instruments in their throats, and making all sorts of sweet sounds? Look now at your little Canary bird hanging in the window, and see, when he sings, how his throat trembles."

"O, I know what you mean now," said Jamie: "you mean my little Canary bird is like a music-box. Well, but what sort of an instrument has he got in his throat? I'm sure I don't know."

"Why, he has a little, fine, soft flute, that can play as many notes as a flute with silver keys."

"A flute in his throat," said Jamie, laughing; "what a funny idea!"

"It is even so," said his mother. "The little pipe through which the Canary bird plays his tunes is more curiously made than any flutes which any instrument-maker ever formed; it

is so small, yet so perfect; it fits into his throat so easily as never to interrupt his eating or breathing; and it turns whichever way he bends his head. Did you ever hear of any musical instrument that was as curious as this?"

"It is very strange," said Jamie; "I might have heard a bird sing a month, and never have thought of all this; but now I do think of it, it seems very curious.

"But, mother, what is this little flute made of?"

"It is made of little elastic rings."

"Elastic! what is that?" said Jamie.

"Why, like India rubber, springy and easily bent; and its being made of so many little elastic rings is the reason why he can turn and bend his throat without any inconvenience, which he could not do if it were a straight, stiff pipe like a flute.

"But," continued his mother, "these little bright eyes that your bird has are more wonderful than anything I have yet told you of; but the contrivance is so very complicated that I do not think I can make you understand it."

"What is *complicated?*" said Jamie.

"The machinery in the inside of my watch is *complicated*; that is, it is made up of a great many parts which answer many different purposes. And there is a machinery inside of one of those little birds' eyes that is more complicated still."

"What, that little dot of an eye, not bigger than a pin head?"

"Well, let me tell you; inside of that little eye is a contrivance by which, when the bird is looking at you, an exact picture of you is painted on the back of his eye."

"It must be a very *small* picture," said Jamie.

"Of course it is," said his mother, "but still it is a picture exactly like you; every line and every color in your face is painted exactly on the back of that little eye."

"Pray, how is it done?" said Jamie.

"That, my dear boy, is the machinery which I told you was so complicated that I cannot hope to make you understand it. There is a contrivance just like it in your own eye, and in the eye of every animal; but it is more curious in a bird's eye because it is so very small."

"What, do we all have pictures painted on the back of our eyes? Is that the way we see?"

"Yes, that is the way; and when you are older you will be able to understand the wonderful and beautiful contrivance by which this is done. It has cost learned men much study to find it out, and they have discovered that the way in which the eye of a bird is made is in some respects more curious than our own."

"Well, mamma," said Jamie, "there's one thing; and that is, that there is a great deal more to be learned about a little bird than I ever supposed."

"But, Jamie, I have not yet told you half. Every bone in this little bird's body is as carefully made and finished as if

that *bone* were the only thing the Creator had to make; and the joints of them are curiously contrived, so that the little fellow can hop, and spring, and turn all day, and yet nothing grates or gets out of order. They all move so springily and easily, that I doubt whether he ever thought whether he had a joint in his body or not. Then he has contrivances in his little stomach for dissolving his food, and turning it into blood, and he has blood vessels to carry it all over his body, and he has nerves to feel with, and he has muscles to move with."

"Now, mother, I don't know what nerves and muscles are," said Jamie.

"Nerves are what you feel with. You eat, and the nerves of your mouth give you your *taste*. The nerves of your nose give you *smell*. The nerves of your eyes *see*, and the nerves of your ears enable you to *hear*, and the nerves that cover your whole body enable you to feel. These nerves all come from a very large nerve that runs down through the middle of your back-bone, and is called the spinal marrow; and they go through the whole body, dividing and branching out, till they form a network covering over the whole of it, so that you cannot put the point of a pin any where without touching a nerve."

"Mother, has a bird just such nerves?"

"Very much the same."

"And what are muscles?"

"Did you never pull a piece of lean meat into little strings?" said his mother.

"Yes," said Jamie.

"Well, a muscle is a bundle of such little strings, and these strings generally end in a strong, tough cord, called a tendon. This muscle has the power of shrinking up short, like India rubber; and when it shrinks it pulls the tendon, and the tendon pulls whatever it is fastened to. I can show you some tendon in a moment. Pull the back of your hand; don't you find that there is a tough, hard cord runs down from every finger? these are tendons. Now take hold tight round your arm, and shut up your hand."

Jamie did so, and exclaimed, "O, mother, when I shut up my hand, I feel something move up here by my elbow."

"That is the muscle," said his mother; "you feel it drawing up short, and it pulls the tendons, and these tendons pull down your fingers."

Jamie amused himself some time with opening and shutting his hand, and then he said, —

"Well, are all the movements that we make done in the same way, by muscles and tendons?"

"Yes," said his mother, "and all the motions of the animals. There are dozens and dozens of muscles, shrinking, and stretching, and pulling about in little Cherry every few moments, and yet none of them wear out, or break, or get out of order, or give him the least trouble."

"I guess Cherry don't think much about them," said Jamie, as he watched the little fellow hopping about in his cage.

"Poor little Cherry," said his mother, "he cannot understand how much God has done for him, with what watchful care he has made his little body, how carefully he has guarded it from all kinds of suffering, and how many beautiful contrivances there are in it to make him happy."

"No, indeed," said Jamie; "if he did he would love God."

"Well, Jamie," said his mother, "how should you feel, if you had contrived some curious and beautiful little plaything, and just as you had it all nicely finished off, some boy should come along with a great stick, and knock it all to pieces?"

"Feel?" said Jamie; "why, I should be mad enough!"

"And suppose that some gentleman should invite you and two or three other boys to his house, and should show you into a large hall full of most beautiful pictures and looking-glasses, and flowers, and every kind of beautiful things, and you should amuse yourselves with breaking his looking-glasses, and beating down his flowers, and pulling to pieces all his curious and beautiful things; how do you think he would feel?"

"Why, I should think he would feel very angry, to be sure."

"Well, Jamie, when little boys go out into the woods and fields which God has filled with beautiful trees and flowers, and with hundreds of little happy birds, all so curiously and

beautifully made, and amuse themselves only with throwing stones at them, and killing them, must not God be displeased?"

"Certainly, I should think he must," said Jamie. After a few minutes, he added, "And it is a great deal worse to kill little birds than it is to break looking-glasses and such things, because little birds can *feel*, you know."

"Yes," said his mother, "and the care with which God has made them shows how much he has thought about them, and how careful he has been to do all he can to make them happy. The Bible says, his *tender* mercies are over all his works; he is not merely good to everything, but he is tender and careful in all he does, as a mother is tender in taking care of a little helpless infant. Now," said his mamma, "I am going to read you a little story."

THE NEST IN THE ORCHARD.

IT was a bright and beautiful morning in April. The snows had melted into the little brooks, and the little brooks ran rattling and gurgling about among the green, mossy stones. The violet had opened its fair blue eyes to look forth from its tufts of leaves; the broad blades of the water-flag and the blue lily were shooting up fresh and green; the yellow dandelions spotted the grass, and tufts of golden cowslips grew close by the water. The little leaves had just begun to show themselves, and looked like a thin green veil spread over the trees. The little birds had come back a long way through the air from the various countries where they had been spending the winter, and were filling the whole air with music.

On a mossy rail, a part of the orchard fence, sat two beautiful blue-birds, enjoying the bright sunshine, and twittering and chattering to each other with all their might. This very pair of birds, the last year, had made their nest in this very

orchard, and brought up a whole family of little birds. All winter they had been chirping about and enjoying themselves among the warm, sunny valleys of the Bahama Isles; and now they had come back again to go to house-keeping in the old orchard.

Right in the middle of this peaceful orchard was a spreading apple-tree, whose bending branches almost touched the ground all around. The tall grass and clover grew up so high under this tree as to mix with the leaves and fruit on the end of these boughs, and underneath there was a delicious cool little room roofed by the branches, where all summer long no creature had admission but the birds, and the little flies, and the honey-bees — for this tree stood in the very middle of the orchard, and Farmer Brown kept good watch that no boys should get into it to trample down the long grass before mowing time. Well, in the trunk of this old tree, just where the branches parted, was a snug little hole. It was exactly big enough for a bird to build its nest in, and it was so situated that any one standing under the tree and looking up could not have thought of there being any hole there. A safer little house for a bird could never have been found; and here these little birds had concluded to build their nest.

So they set to work and picked out all the rubbish and dry sticks that had fallen into the hole, and after they had nicely cleaned it out, they laid the foundation of their little house with small twigs, which they plastered firmly together with

mud; then they picked up straw and hay for the next layer, and wove them into a little round nest; and after that they flew all over the neighborhood to pick up any stray feathers and soft bits of wool or moss that they could find, to line the inside and make it soft and warm.

It took these blue-birds two or three days before their nest was finished. But on the evening of the third day, just as the long, bright beams of the setting sun were darting between the apple-trees of the old orchard, the two little birds might have been seen chirping and chatting together over their finished nest, in the happiest manner in the world.

"What a lucky thing it was, my dear," said the little wife, "that you found such a snug hole! I am sure nobody will ever find us out here. We can fly all about under this great tree, and nobody will ever see us or suspect what we are doing."

"And, my dear," said the little husband, "I am delighted with your weaving here, in the inside of the house. How nicely you have worked in that little bit of red silk on one side! I had no idea, when the good woman swept that piece out of doors, that you could make so much of it. Then how soft and warm the wool is. Ah, very few blue-birds can make a handsomer nest than this."

"Yes," said the wife, "and there is almost a yard of lace woven into it. I picked it off from a bush, where an old lady had hung it on purpose for me."

When the old apple-tree began to put forth its pink buds, after a few days five little blue eggs made their appearance in the nest, and then the mother bird began to set; while her mate spent all his time either in flying about to look up food for her, or perching about in different parts of the tree, and entertaining her with his music. At length the buds on the old tree opened, and it grew white with fragrant blossoms, and five little downy birds were to be seen in the nest. Nobody can say how delighted both parents were. They carefully picked out all the broken bits of the eggs from their nest, and then, while one would sit with wings outspread to keep the little creatures warm, the other would range about and get flies and worms to feed them. Little birds are amazingly hungry; and when either parent returned with food, you might have seen five little red mouths gaping wide open, all ready to receive their portion. And when their hunger was fully satisfied, the mother would nestle over them with her warm feathers, and the father bird would sit beside her, and they would admire the beautiful sheet of white blossoms over their heads, and have long talks about their little family, and how soon they would be learning to fly, and then what journeys they would take with them, and what good times they would have.

One beautiful morning, while the dew-drops were yet twinkling among the blossoms, the father bird prepared to go on one of his journeys after food. He bade good morning to

his pretty family in a sweet song, which he sung on the highest branch of the apple-tree, and then soared off into the blue sky, as happy a bird as ever was seen.

Just at the same time, a man with a large bag slung over his shoulder, and a long gun in his hand, made his appearance in the fields. Pretty soon he saw our bright father blue-bird, as he was sitting on the top of a tree with a worm in his mouth, which he was just going to carry home to his family.

So he drew up his gun and fired, and down fell the poor little blue-bird. The man walked to the spot and picked him up — the shot had gone through his head and he was quite dead.

"What could he want to shoot the little birds for?" said Jamie.

"My dear boy, some people have an absurd way of thinking that birds will injure the fruit; and as there were one or two ripe cherry-trees in this orchard, the man thought they would get his cherries. It is a very foolish idea; for the birds, in fact, do more good by devouring the grubs and insects that injure trees and plants, than all the harm they can do by helping themselves now and then to a little fruit."

Well, it came noon, and the mother bird remained in the old apple-tree, still brooding and tending her little ones, and wondering that their poor father did not return as he had

promised. Very soon the long shadows stretched to the east, and showed that the afternoon was far spent; and still he did not return, and the mother bird wondered, and the little birds began to call for their food. So the mother left the little birds, and went to the top of the tree, and began to call on her husband; but she could not make him hear. She fluttered around among the trees of the orchard, looking for him, and calling him; but in vain. Then she picked up some food for her little ones, and returned home weary and sad. The dark night came, but no kind father returned. And in the morning there was no merry song in the old tree, for the father was gone and the mother was silent. But she took up the burden of supporting her family, and went flying about in the orchard picking up food for her little ones as well as she was able.

While she was thus flying about one day, the same man, with the gun on his shoulder, came spying about the old orchard, for he had said that it was an excellent place to shoot birds. Pretty soon he saw the poor mother picking worms from a mossy rail, and pointed his gun at her. The shot struck her wing and went into her side; but still she was not killed; and all bleeding as she was, she thought she would try to get home to her birdies once more. When she came to the old apple-tree, her little strength was quite spent — her feathers were dripping with blood; and when she had put the food she had gathered into their mouths, she fell

down at the foot of the tree. She fluttered a few moments, and then her soft little eyes closed, and the poor mother bird was dead.

A great while after, when the old apple-tree was loaded with bright yellow apples, the farmers' men mowed the grass under the tree, and one of the boys thought he would go up and shake off some apples. While he was climbing, he put his hand into the hole and found our birds' nest.

He drew it out, and there were five little dead birds in it! So much for shooting the pretty blue-birds!

THE HAPPY CHILD.

"PAPA," said Edward Thompson to his father, "you don't know what beautiful things James Robertson has, of all kinds."

"Oh, yes," said little Robert, "when we were there yesterday, he took us up into a little room that was all full of playthings, just like a toy-shop."

"He had little guns, and two drums, and a trumpet, and a fife," said Edward; "and one of the drums was a real one, papa, such as men play on."

"And, papa, he had railroad cars, with a little railroad for them to go on, and steam-engine, and all," said Robert.

"And a whole company of wooden soldiers," said Edward.

"And all sorts of blocks to build houses," said Robert.

"And besides, papa," said Edward, "he has a real live pony to ride on; such a funny little fellow you never saw; and he has such a pretty little riding-stick, and a splendid saddle and bridle."

"Really," said their father, "you make out quite a list of possessions."

"Oh, but, papa, we have not told you half; he has a beautiful flower-garden, and a gardener to cultivate it for him, so that he don't have to take any trouble with it, and he can do anything with the flowers he chooses."

"Oh, and, papa, he has rabbits and a beautiful gray squirrel, with a cage fixed so nicely; and the squirrel plays so many droll tricks; and he has a parrot that can talk, and laugh, and call his name, and say a great many funny things."

"Well," said their father, "I suppose you think that James is a very happy boy."

"Oh, yes, indeed, papa; how can he help being happy?" said both boys. "Besides, his mamma, he says, lets him do very much as he likes about everything."

"Indeed!" said their father; "and was he so very happy all day when you were there?"

"Why, no, not all day," said Edward; "but then there was a reason for it; for in the morning we had planned to go out to the lake to fish, and it rained, and it made James feel rather cross, I suppose."

"But," said his father, "I should have thought, by your account, that there were things enough in the house to have amused you all."

"But James said he was so used to all those things that he did not want to play with them," said Robert; "he called

some of the prettiest things that he had 'ugly old things,' and said he hated the sight of them."

"Well," said their father, "I suspect, if the truth was known, James is not so much to be envied after all. I have been a week at a time at his father's house, and I have thought that a more uncomfortable, unhappy-tempered little fellow I never saw."

"Well, that is strange," said Edward; "I am sure I would be happy if I was in his place."

"I am afraid you would not," said his father; "for I believe it is having so many things that makes him unhappy."

"Having so many things, papa!" said both boys.

"Yes, my sons; but I will explain this more to you some other time. However, this afternoon, as you are going to have a ride with me, I think I will take you over to see a little boy who is a very happy boy, as I think," said their father.

* * * * *

"I wonder if this can be the house?" said Edward to Robert, as the carriage stopped before a very small brown house.

Their father got out, and asked them to walk in with him. It was a very little house, with only two rooms in it; and in the one they entered they saw a very pale, thin little boy, lying on a small, low bed in front of the door. His face was all worn away by disease, and his little hands, which were folded on the outside of the bed, were so thin one could almost see through them. He had a few playthings lying by him on the

bed, and on a little stand near him was a cracked brown mug, in which were some sweet peas, and larkspurs, and lavender, and bright yellow marigolds; beside which lay a well-worn Bible and hymn-book. His mother was ironing in the next room; but when she saw the boys and their father, she came forward to receive them.

"Well, my little fellow," said Mr. Thompson, "how do you do to-day?"

"Oh, pretty comfortable," he said, cheerfully.

"I have brought my boys to see you," said Mr. Thompson.

The sick boy smiled, and reached out one of his thin little hands to welcome them. Edward and Robert took his hand, and then turned and looked anxiously at their father.

"Papa, how long has he been so sick?" asked Robert.

"More than a year, young gentlemen," said his mother; "it's a year since he has been able to sit up; and it's four months since he has been able to be turned at all in bed; he has to lie all the time, just as you see, on his back."

"Oh, what a long, long time!" said Edward; "why can't you turn him, and let him lie on his side?"

"Because it hurts him to lie on either side."

"What is the matter with him?" asked Robert.

"Why, the doctor says it's a complaint of the bone; it began more than two years ago, down in his foot, and they had to cut the foot off, in hopes that that would stop it; but it did n't; and then they cut off the leg above the knee, and

that did n't stop it; and it 's creeping up, up, up, and finally it will be the death of him. He suffers dreadfully at nights; sometimes no sleep at all for two or three nights."

"O father, how dreadful!" said Edward, pressing close to his father.

"Papa," said Robert, looking up and whispering, "I thought we were going to see a little boy that was very happy."

"Wait a while," said Mr. Thompson, "and you will see;" and then he turned to the sick boy.

"My little fellow," said he, "you find it very tiresome lying here so long."

"A little so," said the boy, smiling very pleasantly; "but then I have so many things to make me comfortable."

"What things?"

"Oh, I have a knife, and I can whittle a little at a time, and I have this little china dog that a lady gave me. I play with that sometimes; and then, don't you see my flowers?"

The little boy pointed to a small bed of flowers just before the door, where there were some pinks, and some larkspurs, and marigolds, and sweet peas; it was weeded very clean, and the flowers made it bright enough.

"Mother planted all those flowers for me in the spring," he said, "and she has watered and weeded them every night after she has done her work; they grow beautifully, and I lie here every day and look at them. Sometimes, when the rain

is falling, or in the morning when the dew is on them, they look so bright and fresh! Mother puts some in the mug to stand by me every day."

"But don't you suffer a great deal of pain?"

"Sometimes I do; but then, sir, I know that God would not send it if it was not best for me, so I am willing to bear it; besides, I know that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered more pain for me than I suffer. There are some beautiful hymns about it in this book," he added, taking up his little hymn-book; "and then I have my Bible. Oh, I don't know how I could get along if it were not for that."

"But are you never unhappy when you see other boys jumping and playing about?"

"No, I am not; I know God knows what is best for me; besides, my Saviour comforts me. I love to lie here, when it is all still, and think about him."

"Don't you hope that sometime you will get well, and be able to go about again?"

"No, I know that I can't; I shall not live a great while; they all say so."

"And don't you feel afraid to die?"

"Oh, no; I feel as if I would be glad to. I long to see my Saviour. All I feel sad about is, that mother will be lonesome when I am gone."

"Well, my little boy, if there is anything that I can send you to make you more comfortable, I shall be glad to."

"Oh, thank you, sir; but I don't know as I want anything."

"I wish I could relieve your pains, my little fellow," said Mr. Thompson.

"God would do it in a minute, if it was only best for me," said the boy; "and if it is not best, I had rather he would not do it. Besides, I think I am happier now than I used to be when I was well."

"Ah! how can that be?"

"I did not love God so much then, and I used to forget to read my Bible. I had not so much pleasure in thinking about heaven," said the little boy.

"You remember," said Mr. Thompson, "it says in the Bible, 'Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.'"

"That is just it, sir," said the boy; "just the way I feel. Oh, I've been very happy since I have been sick here."

Edward and Robert looked at their father, at these words. Mr. Thompson now rose to go.

"If you please, sir, perhaps the boys would like some of my flowers; there is a beautiful root of pinks there, and some roses," said the sick boy.

"Oh, no," said Edward, "we won't take them away from you."

"Oh, I like to give them away," said the boy, earnestly; "do take some."

"Take some, my dear children; it will please him," said

Mr. Thompson, in a low voice, as he picked a few and gave to each of the boys; and then added aloud, "We will keep them to remember you by, my dear little fellow."

As they parted with the little boy, he smiled sweetly, and put out his hand, and added, —

"If you 'll come when my latest rose-bush is in blossom, I 'll give you some roses."

* * *

"Papa," said Edward, "that poor little boy really does seem to be happy, and yet he is poor, and sick, and in pain; and he has very few things, too. It is strange; he is certainly a great deal happier than James Robertson."

"Well, I can tell you the reason," said his father. "It is because James Robertson is a *selfish boy*, that he is unhappy; from morning till night he thinks of nothing but how to please himself. His father and mother have spent all their lives in contriving ways to please him, and have never required him to give up his own will in anything; and now he is so selfish that he is always unhappy. He does not love God, and he does not love his parents, nor anything else, so well as he loves himself; and such a boy will always be unhappy. And the reason that this poor little sick boy is happy, is because he has learned to love God, his Saviour, better than anything else, and to find all his pleasure in trying to do *His* will instead of his own. This is what makes him *peaceful*. If he did not love God, and love to give up his will to Him, and to

bear and suffer whatever He thought best, how miserable he would be now!"

"He would be very fretful, I suppose," said Edward; "I'm afraid I should be."

"Yes," said his father; "but now, when he has learned to give up entirely to the will of his heavenly Father, see how he seems to enjoy his flowers, and his hymn-book, and his few little playthings. He enjoys them more than James Robertson enjoys all his elegant things. Now, my dear boys, remember this: The way to be happy is to have a *right heart*, and not to have everything given to us that we want."

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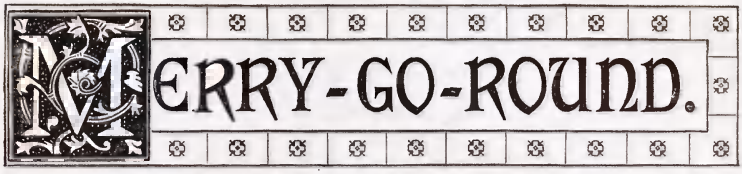

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